Culture and Social Media

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By

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SUMMARY

Studies show that more than half the population in developed countries has experienced online social networking. What is more, a quarter of the world citizens now have a profile in social media, whose users number 1.47 billion[1]. Although English-speaking countries top the list of active social media–using nations, people from all around the world are represented on online social network channels. Social media obviously is a global phenomenon; however, we don't know much about how each nation uses this tool and whether cultural values and demographic factors impact the usage behavior[2].

Despite the fact that a number of scholars indicated the need for additional studies on this topic3, currently none of the top twenty academic papers on Google Scholar and the top twenty books on Amazon in the social media category has anything to do with culture. On the other hand, this may also be the result of the fact that popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn do not localize their interfaces, processes, and formats. People naturally may consider culture to be irrelevant, as social media users from different countries are getting along on these mediums and happily using the platforms, contrary to past studies that suggested culture impacts online interface preferences and online behavioral tendencies[3].

I believe there is a specific reason to explore the relationship between culture and social media because culture itself is related to sociality and socialization. A number of well-known scholars suggested that the most important dimension of culture is the relationship between individuals and society. The working hypothesis of this dissertation is that the role of social media in the shaping of contemporary society must be explored in relation to culture. This thesis contains an extensive review of the existing literature on the use of social media and several studies carried out both within Japan and outside the country that throw some light on the differences between the use of social media in the East and the West. Hence, the thesis is a contribution to the field of social and cultural studies and provides a new approach to the study of social media, by analyzing its use by people from different cultural backgrounds. As indicated in the following chapters, this dissertation includes the first study that has ever been conducted about culture and social media use intensity in addition to the first ever assessment of the impact of social media on social phenomena such as suicide, corruption, happiness and income inequality. With the help of this original study we were also able to develop a cross-cultural computer-mediated communication framework (p. 90) that is likely to be adopted by researchers from various disciplines including anthropology, sociolinguistics, pragmatics and information technologies.

Previous works have analyzed cultural differences in the way people socialize. Hofstede[4] focused on individualism versus collectivism (whether an individual's priority is self-achievement or group achievement); Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner[5] similarly drew on communitarianism versus individualism (whether people socialize as a group or as individuals); Schwartz[6] pointed out embeddedness versus autonomy (whether people's lives are influenced more by social relationships or individual pursuits); and Markus and Kitayama[7] talked about how certain cultures promoted independent-self versus interdependent-self (whether the concept of self depends on one's own judgment or reactions from others). This particular aspect (socialization) of culture explains many things, including why people in some cultures stand very close to each other when talking, why people in some cultures call their family members every day, and why in some cultures people take many risks by thinking that their network members will take care of them3. Since social media, by definition, is about building and maintaining relationships with one's network members and influenced by collective self-esteem and the need to belong[8], we must clarify what role culture plays in what people do in social media and how intensely they use this particular communication tool.

Furthermore, even though social media is reported to be associated with the collapse of governments and the birth of new social movements, most of the past research focused on the individual predictors of social media[9] (who uses it, for what, how, when, etc.) rather than the mass-level use of this communication channel. Currently, there has been little attention paid to how different societies adopt it and how cultural values influence the use of it. During the age of globalization where billions of people from different cultures interact via social media 24/7, we claim in this dissertation that not knowing how culture contributes to social media behavior may create serious misunderstandings between people from different cultural backgrounds, and may constitute a barrier for effective communication in this supposedly hyper-connected world. On the other hand, some may claim that because of the global nature of modern social media channels that increased cross-cultural interactions dramatically, social media actually eliminated cultural differences in self-presentation and online information sharing. This dissertation was written to find answers to all these questions and fill the literature gap in order to help communication practitioners and cross-cultural researchers improve their understanding of the relationship between culture and social media. Particularly, this thesis examines the influence of cultural values on social media use intensity and investigates whether Eastern and Western societies use social networking platforms in the same way.

Followed by this introduction, Chapter 1 summarizes the recent impact on social media on our lives. Chapter 2 describes what social networks are and introduces online social networks. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 focus on the theoretical aspects of social media. While Chapter 5 connects social media use and human communication, Chapter 6 looks at the effects of social media on society. Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 provide some basic information about Facebook and Twitter: the two popular social media platforms and Chapter 10 looks at the business aspects of social media. Chapter 11 reviews past studies on social media and culture and Chapter 12 assesses how different country-level variables impact global social media use. Different from a typical academic paper, Chapter 13 once again talks about Eastern and Western communication styles and how people in the East and West use social media. Chapter 14 compares and contrasts the way Americans and Japanese have been using social media. The last chapter provides a very brief summary of the dissertation.

CHAPTER I

How Are New Technologies and Social Media Changing Our Lives?

The only thing that does not change is change itself.
—Heraclitus

Years ago I saw a cartoon that showed a caveman pointing at a wheel. The caveman was saying, "Everything is invented; technology cannot advance anymore." It was, of course, a joke and many other things were invented after the wheel. While you are reading this article, thousands of scientists and technicians are working on the next gadget that will change our lives in the next five to ten years. Although most popular inventions change the way we live, only new mass communication tools are capable of creating big social impacts and transforming societies.

McLuhan,[1] who is famous for his words "The medium is the message," was the first to point out media's power of transforming the world we live in. He noticed that inventions that are related to communication (the alphabet, printing press, radio, etc.) changed the whole world and the way people perceive it. By marking each major invention as the beginning of an era he divided human civilization into four phases: the tribal age (before the invention of the alphabet), the literary age (the era influenced by the alphabet), the printing age (the era influenced by printing press), and the electronic age (the era influenced by the telegraph and radio waves). He mostly focused on the electronic age, in which anyone can communicate with anybody all around the world and anyone can be famous for a short time. He predicted that in the electronic age the signal-to-noise ratio should be very low, because everyone can send out messages easily.

McLuhan is not alive today and we don't know if he would consider the advent of the Internet or social media as the beginning of another era; but we do know that whenever the way people communicate changes, many other things change. In other words, when the way people exchange messages changes, the world changes. As Eric Schmit,[2] the CEO of Google who famously claimed that "in every 2 days we create as much digital content as we did from the dawn of civilization to 2003," explains:

> *The Internet is the largest experiment involving anarchy in history. Hundreds of millions of people are, each minute, creating and consuming an untold amount of digital content in an online world that is not truly bound by terrestrial laws.... Never before in history have so many people, from so many places, had so much power at their fingertips. And while this is hardly the first technology revolution in our history, it is the first that will make it possible for almost everybody almost everybody to own, develop and disseminate real-time content without having to rely on intermediaries.* (Introduction, *The New Digital Age: Reshaping the Future of People, Nations and Business*)

Clay Shirky,[3] an Internet researcher from NYU, claims that the fact that we don't waste our time passively watching TV as we did in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, and that we are connected to millions of people with high-speed Internet, enable us to produce and distribute creative and original content collaboratively. According to Shirky, mass media and social networks, two important components of modern societies, are now quite different from any of their previous forms, but are more interconnected than ever before. In the past, news was created by news reporters, curated by editors, and distributed by media conglomerates. Today, news is created by average citizens and distributed via free public channels like Twitter and YouTube. By the same token, the way social networks are formed today is totally different. With the new social media platforms, forming a group and gathering new members may just take hours something that used to take days, months or years in the past.

The combination of social networks and interactive mass media created social media, which changed almost everything—from new births and funerals, to divorces and to new friendship developments. Simply put, our lives now start and end with social media. Studies[4,5] show that 92% of American children under age 2 have a

social networking presence and even a significant number of unborn children have Facebook profiles.[6] On the other hand, many Facebook users are naturally dying every day,[7] and their loved ones feel negative emotions when they see friendly comments from those who are unaware that the person is gone or receive a birthday reminder on Facebook for a family member who is already Deceased. Social media also takes its toll on romantic relationships. Today one-third of divorces in the United Kingdom have a reference to Facebook use[8] and a quarter of American couples break up on Facebook.[9] The most interesting of all, despite the notion that social media relationships are just reflections of preexisting real-life relationships, many people report defriending their friends on Facebook because of what they do online (e.g. posting a depressing comment).[10] Additionally, a significant portion of young people care more about updating their social media status in social gatherings instead of enjoying face-to-face interactions.[11] These trends lend weight to the converse notion: real-life relationships are reflections of social media friendships.

Besides social media's impact on individuals, one should never overlook its effects on social transformations and movements. For instance, the Arab Spring,[12,13] in which average people toppled antidemocratic governments in Egypt and Tunisia that had held power for Decades, is now considered a social media–driven political movement. Although Malcolm Gladwell[14] rejected the idea that social media can cause revolutions, as many uprisings changed societies before the social media era, many researchers[12,13] seem to agree that social media played a critical role in the context of the events because a) political debates that took place before the events were driven by social media b) an increase in social media conversations preceded an increased level of on-street activities and c) with the help of social media, protesters achieved international support. One can expect that social media will still be one of activists' preferred weapons in the twenty-first century, since social media cannot be censored, can help people organize in a short time, and has strong, immediate effects.

Another aspect of social media that we should not forget is its crucial role in natural disasters. Social media were used to inform publics and request help during the Tōhoku earthquake, the Australia bush fires, the Red River flooding, and many other disasters from all around the world.[15] Since traditional methods of communication tend to fail during emergencies (electricity might be limited and phone lines may not function properly), social media can become a savior.[15] Some scholars[16] claim that beyond help and information, we use social media for emotional support and to maintain the sense of community when disasters strike. For example, in a study we conducted after the Tōhoku earthquake, we experienced an emotional roller coaster when we saw desperate calls for help on Twitter from a victim and then a happy message after the same person was saved by the rescue forces.[17] Some researchers' analysis[18] showed that an early-warning system for people who live near disaster-hit areas could be easily be developed based on messages posted on Twitter. For instance, a sudden increase on Twitter in certain words, such as *shaking*, *fire*, *burning*, *quake*, etc., means a disaster has likely occurred and all government forces should be alarmed. This would not only help establish cost-effective disaster-monitoring centers in underdeveloped countries but also save many lives.

When it comes to doing business, the advent of cloud technology has made it easier and cheaper than ever before to store information. YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have reduced the cost of marketing for new startups. Because of social businesses,[19] which connect consumers and suppliers, brands can co-create value together with all different segments of the society (e.g. customers, local governments, material suppliers, inventors, and NPOs can smoothly communicate on social networks and together create the most useful and desirable new products and services). New forms of social media not only helped big brands reduce the cost of communication and increase the number of touch-points with their customers, but also improved the efficiency of small-scale and business-to-business companies as well. Today, 20% of business-to-business enterprises report generating high-quality sales leads through social media.[20]

Nevertheless, consumers, not brands, seem to be the biggest winners in this social transformation led by social media. Nowadays, consumers have more information about products and services and more alternatives to choose from.[21] With the help of social media it is very easy for people to get their friends' opinion or expert views about products that interest them. This, in turn, reduces the power of advertising and increases the power of word of mouth.[21] What's more, with social media as a free PR tool in hand, dissatisfied customers can force companies to make big concessions or change their practices completely. For instance, in 2008, United

Airlines refused to refund a customer whose guitar was broken in the cargo. Angered by the indifference of the company, the owner of the guitar made a song and a YouTube video titled "United Breaks Guitars" that showed the company's amateur handling of the case.[22] After the video went viral, United Airlines apologized and offered two new guitars. In the pre-social media era, the company likely could have easily gotten away with this episode of poor service.

Unfortunately, the impact of new technologies on our lives may not be always positive. Whenever new technologies become popular, they also take away many things from our lives. They empower us to communicate, coordinate, mobilize, and socialize more effectively, but at the same time we all have a tendency to avoid and confront these new tools when our privacy and safety are threatened.[23] The following list summarizes the solutions provided by the ubiquitous mobile technologies that also create different problems:

Paradoxes of Technology	
Empowerment vs. enslavement	New technologies allow us to be connected to and reachable by everyone. However, as a result, our privacy is threatened and technology starts controlling us. Whether we want to or not, we feel socially obliged to take phone calls, answer emails, and send responses to messages on Facebook.
Independence vs. dependence	New gadgets such as cell phones allow us to do many things on our own. However, this situation creates dependency, as we can't go even one day without our phones and we feel helpless when the Internet is down.
Fulfills needs vs. creates needs	Technology resolves some problems but also introduces new ones, e.g. we need devices with longer battery life, we need antivirus software to be safe, we need to learn new skills, etc.
Competence vs. incompetence	We can get any information we want and reach anyone we want with the help of new technologies. However, we lose our ability to remember phone numbers and our ability to articulate our thoughts.
Engaging vs. disengaging	When we are engaged in an activity that involves the use of new technology, we need to disengage from whatever we are doing. We directly interact with our family and loved ones less frequently because we tend to engage more with new portable technology tools.
Public vs. private	New technologies blur the line between what is public and what is private. People may talk on the phone or message someone among a circle of acquaintances, which may be disturbing.
Illusion vs. disillusion	We tend to think new communication technologies make our lives better. However, the more we communicate, the more trivial our conversations become. In other words, more communication does not always equal better communication.

Table 1. Paradoxes of Technology. Source: Sirkka L. Jarvenpaa and Karl R. Lang[23]

The reflections of these paradoxes can be clearly seen in the use of social media. Today many people take breaks from popular social networks,[24] exhausted by the information bombardment in their news stream and fed up with their friends' annoying or impersonal messages. People who use social media heavily report having higher body mass, lower credit scores, and higher credit-card debt.[25] Furthermore, social media use can be addictive, because users tend to think their interactions are real.[26] Passive users usually feel jealous or anxious after using an online social network.[27] Today, 90% of kids have witnessed cyberbullying in social media,[28] and some authors claim that the new generation may not be able to communicate like normal people do because most of their social interactions are online.[29]

Beside these seven paradoxes, the constant change in communication technologies and the ubiquity of the Internet also impact us biologically. According to Nicholas Carr,[30] our brains simply process information and operate differently now, because we don't use our long-term memory as much as we did in the past. Furthermore, information noise and the constant distraction of social media cause us to lose our ability to focus on a task.

- Losing our Focus: We are bombarded by constant information on the Internet; because of this we lose

our ability to focus on things in the longer term. Some educational studies show that video games improve our pattern-recognition abilities, but at the same time weaken our ability to focus. Brain studies also show that if we cannot pay attention to a stimulus for a certain amount of time we are less like to remember that stimulus.

- Need for Interruption: We are accustomed to interruption and actually feel worse if we are not interrupted (if we don't get an email, a like, or a retweet). Did you know that people around the world use their cell phones about 150 times per day on average?[31] (Calling, 22 times; checking time, 18 times; social media, 9 times; camera, 8 times; etc.)
- Need for Multitasking: Platforms like Windows taught us how to multitask but now it is difficult for us to fully focus on a single task. When we are doing only one thing, we may feel we are not doing much.
- Loss of Personal Wisdom: Since the Internet can store everything and we can look up everything we want, we don't memorize things that may matter. Although some may claim this allows greater productivity and creativity, in reality we are losing our personal wisdom by not remembering things.

Similarly, researcher Paul Johnson[32] argued that in the post-Internet era our brains have changed significantly. He drew attention to "brain plasticity," which means some areas in the human brain may expand or shrink depending how much we use that particular area. For instance when people lose their sight, their touching senses may develop further because the brain area allocated to touching expands. Brain-scan studies[33] that compared how people use Google showed that different areas of the brain activated among different people. Among those who used the Internet often, the "reasoning and Decision-making"–related areas were activated while reading the Google results; on the contrary, mostly "memory"-related areas were activated among novice Internet users. These findings indicate that people with no Internet experience treated Google results like a textbook and tried to make sure they could remember the relevant info. On the other hand, the priority of the Internet-savvy seemed to be comparing and contrasting that info with what they already know, as well as thinking about how they can use that info.

All different kinds of emerging technologies are also subject to privacy or security concerns. Google Glass has been hailed as a prototype of wearable devices that will enable us to be connected all the time and record and retrieve information without any effort. The device has already faced a serious backlash, having been banned in many premises[34] because of confidentiality and copyright issues, in addition to concerns about invasion of privacy. (Some of these premises include banks, hospitals, bars, concert venues, and locker rooms.) 3-D printers were also seen as a great solution to solve the high cost of distribution and customization, but many were shocked to learn that now anyone can 3-D print a handgun at home.[35] Similarly, low-cost drones can now be used to provide help to victims of disasters, improve the efficiency of large-scale farming, and maintain public security. However, they can easily be used to collect private information and harm people.[36] It wouldn't be such a great future if ill-intentioned people have their own drones equipped with 3-D printed weapons controlled by Google Glass.

To sum up, after the digital revolution we digitized ourselves online. We disclose more information about ourselves at a higher frequency, to a higher number of people we don't know, and in a variety of forms (audio, video, pictures, text, etc.) that can remain on the Internet forever. Marc Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, claimed that every year we double the amount of info we share online,[37] because today what is private is not the same as what was private ten years ago. It is still debatable if the benefits of having our lives digitized outweigh costs. When the U.S. government was caught red-handed breaching its citizens' privacy by collecting data about almost every conversation Americans are having on the phone or via email, Obama put it this way: "You can't have 100 percent security and then also have 100 percent privacy and zero inconvenience. You know, we're going to have to make some choices as a society."[38]

CHAPTER II

Social Networks

Throughout history, well-known scholars such as Auguste Comte and Émile Durkheim talked about how social actors are connected to each other and how a society can be understood by simply looking at the way its members are connected.[1] Social networks, which are the maps of interconnections among socially related people, clearly play important roles building social structures.[2] Human beings, sometimes called social animals, live in social networks; from criminal activities to the spread of innovations, almost every social phenomenon can be explained by social networks. Mainly driven by the personal needs for communication and belongingness[3] and influenced by gender, income, education, personality, and attractiveness, the size of a social network in real life is expected to be about 125–150 people.[4] However, only four of these contacts are considered a real source of help during severe hardships.[4] Although we are genetically programmed to build and maintain a social network, it is suggested that new communication technologies such as the telephone and the Internet dramatically impacted our social networking behavior.[5] (Taken from Acar, 2008: Antecedents and consequences of online social networking behavior.)

The impact of social networks on our lives may be larger than we realize. Fowler and Christakis,[6] the authors of the book *Connected*, found that our happiness, our weight, our health, and even our life expectancy can all be predicted by our social network or the people to whom we are either directly or indirectly related. A longitudinal study that monitored the weight of people in a small town found that obesity spread just like a virus among network members: if people started living with a fat person or interacted with people who were fat eventually they grew fat themselves. Similarly, the authors indicate that people who have a happy friend in their network are significantly more likely to be happy and those with a lonely friend are 50% more likely to feel lonely. The book also discusses how men who were surrounded by more men during their adolescence were likely to have a shorter life and how Harvard students were significantly more likely to get a flu shot if they had a friend in their social network who got one.

Times are changing and social networks are growing ever more important. Because of digital convergence[7]—a term that refers to the integration of all new media organs (TV, Internet, newspapers, etc.)—as well as the interactivity of the media and the storage and forwarding capacity of new communication channels, governments, cities, and people are now more networked. This phenomenon is also known as the network society.[8] According to Van Dijk, new media enables each person to discover social information and, more importantly, eliminates the need for face-to-face communication. When we don't depend on face-to-face communication, time and space limitations of human communication become irrelevant, meaning barriers for network communication and information flow among network members disappear. Therefore, modern social networks, driven by people who can skillfully use the Internet and advanced communication technologies, are more effective and have more influence on societies in the twenty-first century.[8]

Definition

A social network is defined as "a set of people (or organizations or other social entities) connected by a set of social relationships, such as friendship, co-working or information exchange."[9] A broader definition would be, "a social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called 'nodes,' which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige."[10] Each node represents a member of a social network. Connections between the nodes are called ties. If two nodes are strongly related or frequently contact with each other the tie between them is considered to be "strong" whereas loose connections are usually referred as "weak" ties.

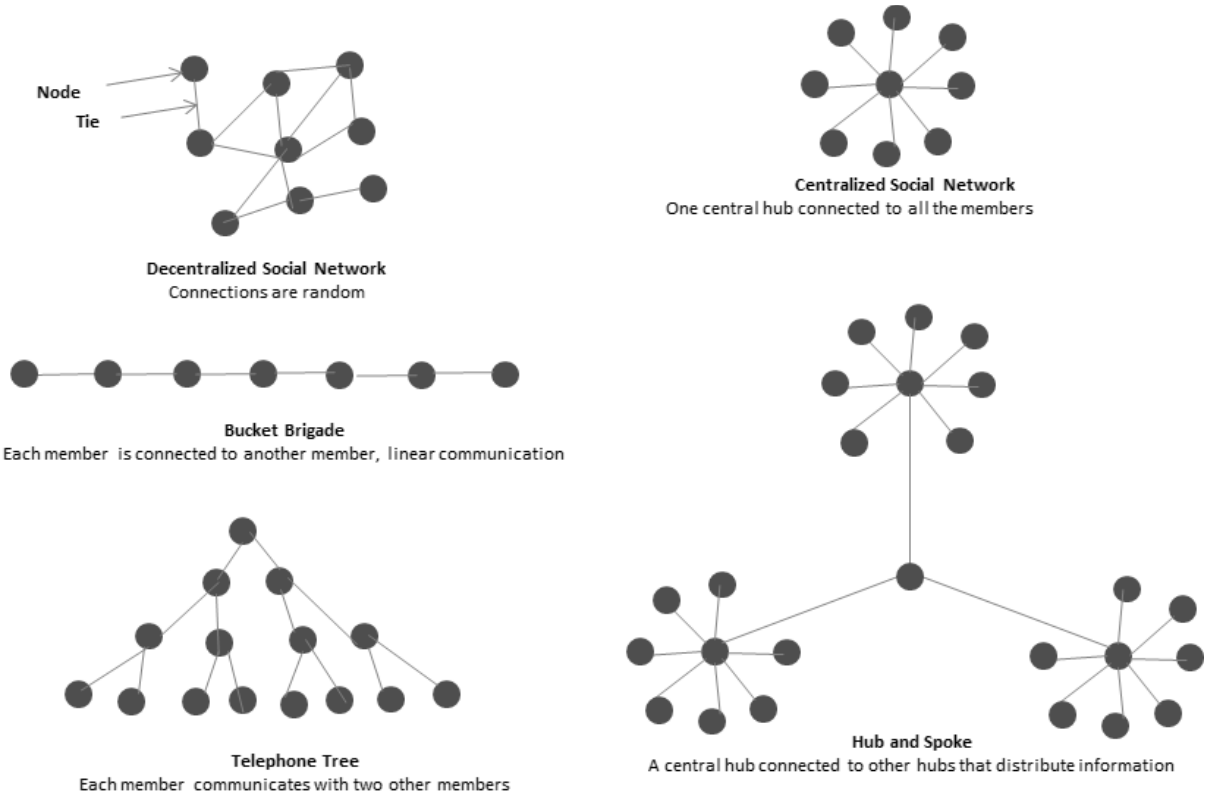


Figure 2.1: Social Networks. Source: Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. (2009)

Rules of Networks & Social Networks
Growth: Our network always grows because the number of people we meet is higher than the number of people from whom we disconnect.[11] The fact that the world population, the Internet, and the number of communication channels are also growing indicates the speed of growth in our social networks may accelerate.

Preferential attachment: New members of any social network prefer to connect to those with a larger number of connections because this would maximize their chances of reaching the highest level of information in the shortest time.[11]

Homophily: Our friends tend to be similar to us. In other words, we tend to connect and communicate with those who resemble us (the same gender, age, school, town, culture, etc.).[12]

Reciprocity: Just like human relationships in real life, social network relationships are reciprocal.[12] If someone sends a message, we tend to reciprocate. If someone follows us on Twitter, we tend to follow that person as well. If someone leaves a comment on our picture, we tend to do the same.

Transitivity: Our friends often know each other.[12] We usually connect with people who also know each other, and we usually have only a small number of connections who don't know anything about our friends. This helps us get more support from our social networks and spread the information more quickly.

The power of betweenness: This is also known as *betweenness centrality*, which refers to the power a node has based on how easily that noDecan connect to all other nodes in the network.[13] In other words, the most influential person in a social network is not the member with the largest number of direct connections, but the one who directly or indirectly knows the most network members. Put differently, the more people depend on a network member to distribute information, the more power he or she has. For instance, the principal of our school might not have many direct connections in the school itself, but if we want to send information to a teacher in another school we may rely on him. When a network size increases, the power of the person in the center also increases.[13]

Metcalfe's Law: The value, the productivity, and the power of a social network always increase exponentially when new members join.[14] In any given network, if we presume that all members are connected to each other, there would be a total of $n \times (n - 1) / 2$ connections. If there are five people in a network, the number of total connections would be ten, i.e., $5 \times (4 / 2)$. If the number of network members increases by one, then the number of total connections increases by 50% to fifteen, i.e., $6 \times (5 / 2)$.

$$\boldsymbol{Value = n \times (n - 1) / 2}$$

Size and density: Small networks tend to be denser, where everybody knows everybody; and large networks tend to be sparse, where we are only directly connected to a small portion of the network.[11] Density is usually calculated as the number of total direct connections divided by total possible connections. A network's density is considered 1 if everybody is connected to each other.

The law of diminishing influence: A member's impact on the network dissipates node by node.[15] We have some influence on our first-degree connections, little influence on the second-degree connections, and very little influence on the third-degree connections. We may have influence on our friends, some indirect influence on friends of friends, a trivial influence on friends of friends of friends, and no influence at all on friends of friends of friends of friends.

Granovetter effect (the strength of weak ties): Weak ties help us more because our connections whom we barely know are likely to be connected to those we cannot reach.[16] Strong ties are not as useful because they are likely to know each other, meaning they cannot introduce us to a new opportunity.

Dunbar's number: Robin Dunbar, a Scottish scientist, measured the size of groups formed by different primates and concluded that the cortex size (the frontal area of the brain) determines the group size animals form.[17] Animals with bigger brains can form larger groups, because a larger cortex empowers them to remember other members of their pack and successfully communicate with the rest of the herd when predators attack or when hunting for food. Dunbar also analyzed human social networks by assessing Christmas cards people send to their friends and family and found that in Western societies the average size of a social network is about 150 people. Our brains cannot successfully handle more than 150 people, according to Dunbar.

Bacon number: The *Bacon number* refers to the degree of separation of each actor and actress in Hollywood from Kevin Bacon. Since Kevin Bacon played in various movies with many different actors, it was observed that he could be connected to any actor or actress with only a few nodes. For instance, Japanese actress Rinko Kikuchi's Bacon number is only 2, because she starred with Jamie McBride in the movie *Babel* (2006). McBride, in turn, played with Kevin Bacon in *Beauty Shop* (2005), thus making Kikuchi only two nodes away from Kevin Bacon (one node is a direct connection).

Six degrees of separation[19]: In the 1960s the psychologist Paul Milgram theorized that any two randomly selected people in the United States can be connected to each other by their friends, via friends of friends of friends of friends of friends. To prove his theory, he asked people in Omaha, Nebraska, to deliver a package to a stockbroker in Massachusetts that no one in Omaha knew about. By giving the package to someone who lived close to Massachusetts and having that person give the package to someone who may know that

stockbroker, the participants of the experiment eventually managed to get the package delivered. Milgram found that on average the package was exchanged among six different people. He concluded that any two randomly selected people in the USA are actually only separated by six degrees.

Winner-takes-all: Networks and connected platforms are usually dominated by one central node. This is related to betweenness centrality; the bigger a social network becomes, the less likely two central nodes can have equal power.[20] Many services that are dependent on other people's membership are dominated by one big player: Facebook dominates online social networks; Google dominates search engines; English dominates languages spoken all around the world; Microsoft Windows dominates operation systems; eBay dominates auction sites. People want to be connected by using the shortest path, and having one big central node makes these connections easier, faster, and more convenient.

Groups & Social Networks

The terms *social networks* and *groups* may be used interchangeably, but there is a major difference between them: a group is a circle of people who have come together for a common goal, while a network is the map of ties displaying how those members are connected.[6] The most important elements of groups are interaction and intergroup communication,[21] as explained below:

> *To count as a group, a social entity must have regular member interaction. Most commonly, this means either speaking, signing, or typing to one another, though some groups' most important interactions are physical or nonverbal, as in the case of a play group, jazz band, or work crew. If communication does not occur with any regularity in a group, there may exist a social gathering or relationship network of some kind, but not a group. After all, the very idea of grouping entails an ongoing pattern of communication among the group's members.* (*The Group in Society*, p. 7)

We naturally join groups because of our needs of survival, social belonging, and social reference.[15] Studies show that groups in general make better Decisions then individuals.[15] Perhaps because of this we are usually more influenced by people with whom we share a group. We usually gain a sense of cohesion, belonging, and social identity by being in groups. On the other hand, we tend to experience disinhibition (we can't control what we do), deindividuation (we conform to group norms), and polarization (our Decisions, influenced by group dynamics, fall into more extreme ends) as a result of being in a group.[15] Some scholars claim that group influence on individuals is very strong and individuals usually misjudge the risks of a Decision (groupthink) and easily change their attitudes and/or behaviors based on how the other members of their group are acting (social conformity). [22]

According to Paul Adams,[15] we usually belong to between four and six groups based on 1) our life stage (relatives, in-laws); 2) shared experiences (college, work, trip); and 3) shared interests (hobbies, circles, etc.). When our life stages, careers, and hobbies change, the groups to which we belong change as well. For instance, during early childhood we would have a playgroup from our street, and then we would have groups in our elementary school or a fraternity at college. We may later on join and leave a number of interest groups, including politically affiliated groups, hobby groups, and neighborhood-watch groups. Although the people we interact with change throughout our lives, there is always *the rule of 5-15-50-150-500*. We all have an inner circle (5 people), a sympathy group (15 people), occasional contacts (50 people), a maximum group (150 people), and weak ties (acquaintances, friends of friends, etc.).

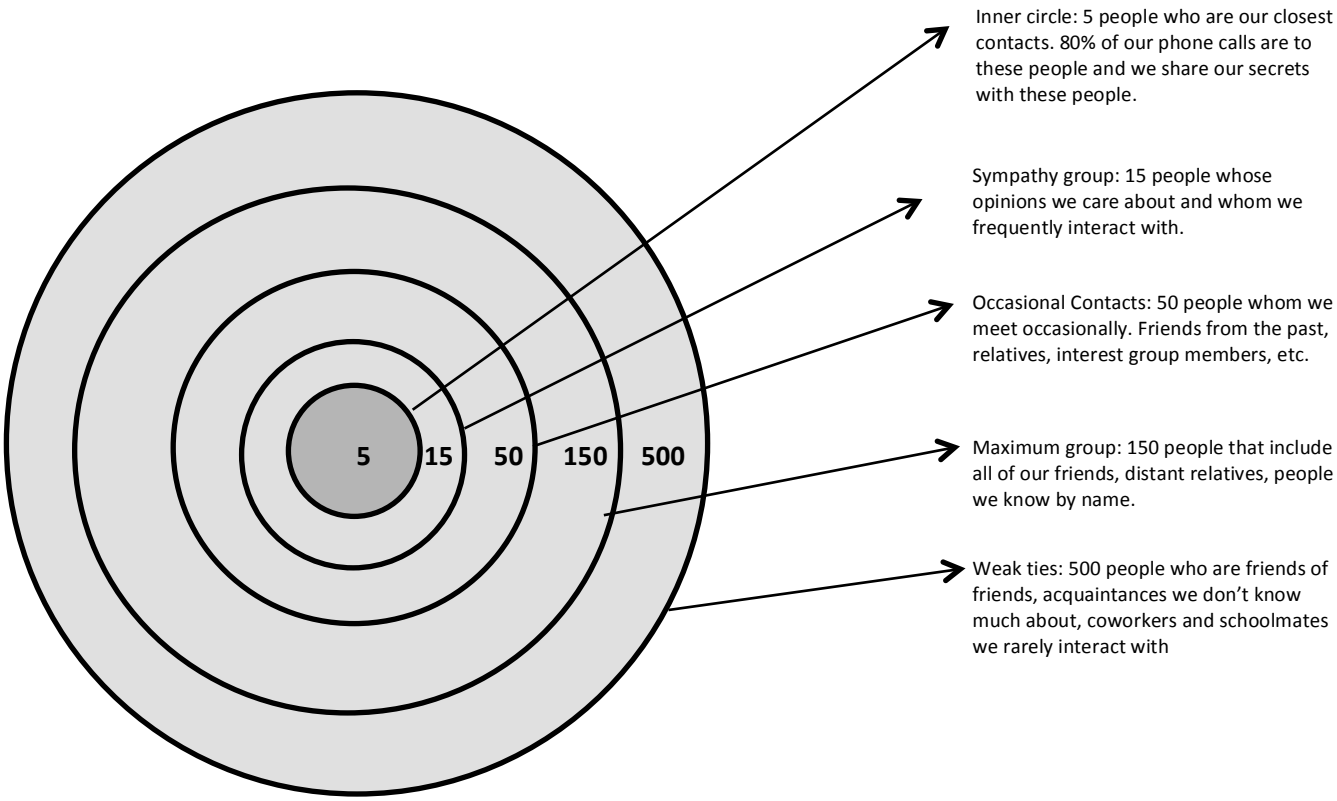


Figure 2.2: Illustration of Our Social Contacts. Source: Paul Adams (2011).

Community, Society & Social Networks

The proponents of social capital theory claim that people have a natural tendency to interact with other members of society and build functioning networks that usually result in physical, informational, financial, or other forms of gains for all members.[23] However, not all ties in social groups can be considered the same in nature. More than one hundred years ago, the German social scientist Tönnies[24] proposed that social relationships can actually be classified into two types: community (*gemeinschaft*) and society/association (*gesellschaft*). Usually community relationships tend to be affective; members of a community are likely to share the same place and similar values. An example of a community would be family, a network of relatives, or a small village where people are closely related. Associations/societies, on the other hand, bring members together around a shared goal, such as a group of employees working in a factory. Their relationships are rule-based, and what keeps them together is their desire to achieve their own goals. We should note that cyberspace relationships tend to be of the gesellschaft type, as they don't always depend on shared location or shared beliefs.

Social scientists also believe that the way people form networks in society may depend on "social distance," which can be affective, normative, and interactive.[24] Affective social distance is feeling closer to or distant from certain people based on individual affection. Normative social distance is related to the social norm of including all members of our social group into our network, while excluding all non-members of our social group from it. Lastly, as its name indicates, interactive social distance refers to reduced social distance as a result of frequent or important interactions.

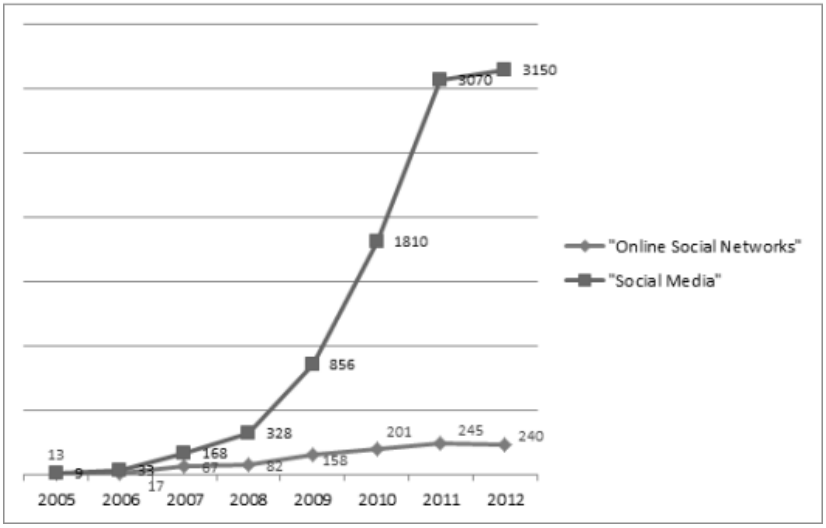
Online Social Networks

The history of online social networks goes back to 1978, when computer scientists Murray Turoff and S. Roxanne Hiltz established the Electronic Information Exchange System at the New Jersey Institute of Technology for the U.S. Office of Civilian Defense. The system allowed users to email each other, see the bulletin board, and utilize the list server.[25] About twenty years later, in 1997, sixdegrees.com (the name refers to Milgram's famous small-world study revealing that two randomly selected American citizens can be connected to each other by six nodes) became the first widely known website to allow its users to establish an online social network.[26] This was followed by the online business network of Ryze.com (2001) and then Friendster.com (2003), an online social networking service that enjoyed popularity all around the world.[27] The following timeline[28] nicely illustrates the development of online social networks in the Western world:

Figure 2.3 : Major Online Social Networks

A simple definition of online social networks[28] is, "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (p. 211). Today, with the inclusion of Google+, Tumblr, and Pinterest, it becomes increasingly hard to define social network sites. For instance, one may refer to Pinterest as an interactive curating site, even though it meets all three criteria outlined in the definition above. Perhaps because of this difficulty, the term *online social networks* (OSNs) seems that it is being replaced by the term *social media*. A quick check on Google Scholar shows that there are currently more than 9,000 academic papers with a title that includes the words "social media." Strangely, in 2005, when both social media and OSNs were new, *online social networks* was used more often. This indicates that the terms are very similar, though recently *social media* is preferred.

Figure 2.4 : Number of Academic Papers on Google Scholar about "Social Media" vs. "Online Social Networks" as of December 2012



Note: Social networks are investigated by different scholars from various disciplines and there is no unifying theory that can explain how social networks operate. Additionally, most social network research was conducted before social media became mainstream, meaning the findings were influenced by "time and space" limitations of social network communications. In today's online social networks, some of the rules mentioned above may not hold true. For instance, despite the fact that we have a notion of six degrees of separation, on Facebook or Twitter any two people from all around the world can be connected to each other in fewer than four degrees (this is because celebrities may have social connections from all around the world). In the same vein, people usually have more than 150 friends on Facebook, which contradicts the norm of the Dunbar number. Furthermore, information flow between two members of a network usually follows the shortest available path available. For instance, if someone in India wants to call a person from Japan, it would be through a hub that is geographically closest to Japan (e.g., China or Korea). However, nowadays most information flow in telecommunications is through the United States, which may represent the cheapest path but not the path of minimum distance between the two nodes (that is, geodesic). Lastly, because of new social media technologies, we may influence people who are more than three degrees away. We all may have shared messages in social media that were posted neither by our friends, nor our friends' friends.

CHAPTER III

Social Media

Definition

Kaplan and Heinlein[1] defined social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 61). According to Google Scholar, this definition has been cited more than 1,000 times in less than four years, and emphasizes the importance of the user generated content (UGC) that emerged after the development of Web 2.0 and turned Internet users into more active content producers. Additionally, the authors claimed that social presence (driven by intimacy between the involved parties and immediacy of the message) and self-disclosure (driven by the goal of influencing others to gain a reward or develop relationships with others) can help us understand the different types of social media and provided the following table, which classifies user generated content sharing sites into six categories.

Table 3.1 Classification of Social Media Categories

		Social Presence & Media Richness		
		Low	***Medium***	***High***
Self-Presentation & Self-Disclosure	***High***	Blogs	Social networks (Facebook, Friendster, etc.)	Virtual Social Worlds (e.g. Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative Projects (Wikipedia, InnoCentive)	Content Communities (e.g. YouTube)	Virtual Game Worlds (e.g., World of War Craft)

Source: Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009

Kietzmann and his colleagues[2] reviewed the relevant literature and some active blogs in the area and developed a different and more comprehensive framework to identify and classify social media platforms. They came up with seven building blocks, namely: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, platforms, relationship, reputation, and groups. Of these, identity—the way users disclose information about themselves, which has implications for privacy control—seems to be the most important aspect of social media. These building blocks (or, as Kietzmann et al. refer to it, the *honeycomb framework*) are not mutually exclusive and were developed to help social media practitioners monitor and understand people's social media activities.

The following figure illustrates the honeycomb building blocks developed by Kietzmann et al. (2011).

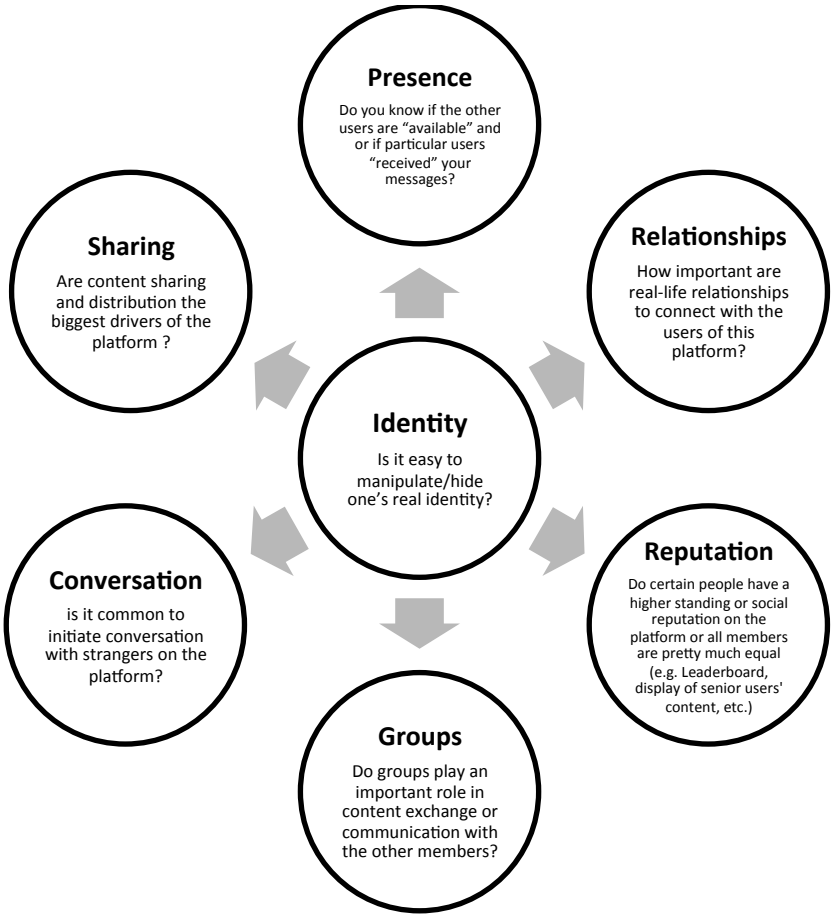


Figure 3.1 The Honeycomb Model. Source: Kietzmann et al. (2011)

Identity: Identity is the core concept of any social media platform; it has to do with how much users disclose about themselves. Contrary to what one might think, identity is not only about name, age, gender, or location. It does includes what users like and share and comment on. People can have different real-life and virtual identities or different identities on different social media platforms.[2]

Conversations: The conversations block "represents the extent to which users communicate with other users in a social media setting" (p. 244). Some social media platforms are more conversation-oriented than others. For instance, Twitter is used by many commercial and noncommercial organizations to spark a conversation about various topics. With the help of the real-time trending topics feature on Twitter, everyone can see what people from all around the world are talking about at any given moment. Although Facebook is the largest social network, most of the conversations on Facebook are likely to be between known parties, whereas Twitter and Google+ encourage conversations between strangers as users can use pseudonyms, message anyone, and leave comments on trending topics and popular threads. Another aspect of conversations on social media is *conversation velocity*, which refers to the speed and direction of a conversation: how fast messages are exchanged and if the sentiment about the topic is becoming negative or positive.

Sharing: A social network would be nothing but a useless map of connections if people did not share anything with each other. Sharing itself is a means of interaction; this activity may or may not lead to meaningful conversations based on what connects the members of a network (e.g., interest networks or networks based on preexisting friendships). Organizations and institutions must understand the common needs, lifestyles, and characteristics of their social media followers and share things that are relevant to what connects them.

Presence: This block is mostly related to whether social media users make their location and availability known to other users or not. Some social media platforms (such as Twitter) allow their users to share their location and availability publicly; others only show this info to friends in one's network. In a further study[3] Kietzmann and his colleagues argued that presence is also related to *interactivity* and *non-mediation*. Interactivity means synchronous and immediate message exchange. However, for some social networks like YouTube and LinkedIn, presence does not matter that much and it is not even relevant.

Relationships: This block is about the strength and relative importance of ties between members of any given social network. In some social networks, though not all, the strength of a relationship between two members can predict whether one of those members can influence the other. The authors went on to say that "the structural property of relationships refers to users' social graphs, how many connections they have and where they are positioned within their network of relationships. Research shows that users are more likely to be an influential member (also known as *influencers*) in their network the denser and larger their portfolio of relationships is, and the more central their position in the network"(p. 112). The authors also refer to Granovetter's famous work about the strength of weak ties, which explains how such ties can be more effective to build social capital and gain material benefits because members with strong ties are likely to know the same people within similar circles, and thus have little chance to find out about new, unique social opportunities.

Reputation: This block involves social standing, or the evaluation of a message or a user by other network members. When it comes to messages, this evaluation may come in the form of likes on Facebook, referrals on LinkedIn, retweets on Twitter, and ratings on YouTube. No doubt the number of followers, fans, or subscribers of a user also are related with reputation, and are likely to determine the credibility of a user on a network. The impact of reputation may be bigger on some social media channels than on others (e.g., Twitter recommends users with a large number of followers, while Facebook does not). Reputation basically has to do with trust, that is, what people do in a network will determine how much they will be trusted in the future in the same network.

Groups: This block involves how easy or difficult it is to create and maintain groups or subgroups in a network. Although the value of a network can be determined by the number of total users, the human brain can only handle with relationships with 150 people, no matter how many people there are in the platform. Social media channels can be classified into different categories based on whether they emphasize open or closed groups and whether they encourage listing and grouping users.

What is Social?

Briefly put, almost any interactive site that allows people to create content or share messages can be considered social media. According to this definition, seven out of the top ten websites (according to Alexa.com) in the United States are examples of social media (namely Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo, Wikipedia, eBay, Craigslist, and LinkedIn). However, Dion Hinchcliff and Peter Kim[4] distinguish very clearly between what is a social media site and what is not. According to their book *Social Business by Design*, a platform needs to have the following two features to be considered social:

- *Social graph*: "This consists of a user profile that identifies a person, and optionally (but typically), a list of everyone that person is connected with. In other words, it is who a person is and those he or she knows (p. 130)."

- *Activity stream*: "This lists the events taking place between the social graphs of users. These are typically status updates or other messages such as pictures or other media that a person posts and that are then visible to everyone listed as a social graph connection (p. 130)."

Types of Social Media

Since most major websites tend to be interactive and social, nowadays social media seems to be everywhere

and almost all of our real-life experiences can be recorded and shared via social media. There are plenty of jokes on the Internet about how different social media sites can be used to broadcast our lives. A simple activity like eating sushi can be shared via social media in many ways.

- Twitter: "I want to eat sushi."
- Facebook: "I've just had sushi."
- Foursquare: "This is the place I eat sushi."
- YouTube: "Watch how I eat sushi."
- LinkedIn: "I am a sushi expert."
- Quora: "Why do some people not like sushi?"

With new sites popping up every day, it is also growing ever harder to classify which ones count as social media. Although only three years old, Kaplan and Haenlein's classification of high versus low user self-presentation may not be enough to compare social media sites today, considering the fact that users can manipulate how much they want to disclose about themselves or create several accounts (one public, one private) on the same platforms. Brian Solis, who focuses mostly on business aspects of social media and evaluates the functionality of these sites, created the following typology where today's social media platforms and social applications can be classified into twenty-one different categories:

Social Networks • Facebook • Google+ • Tagged	Blogs/Microblogs • Wordpress • Blogger • Tumblr	Crowd Wisdom: Sites that rank interesting content based on what members share or vote on • Digg • Buzzfeed • Reddit	Question/Answer: Sites that allow people to ask questions to public and get answers • Quora • Yahoo! Answers • LinkedIn Answers	Comments: Discussion and commenting platforms that can be embedded to mainstream websites • Livefyre • Disqus • IntenseDebate
Social Commerce: Platforms that enable members to get more discounts when shopped together • LivingSocial • Kaboodle • shopkick	Social Marketplace: Platforms that enable people to buy and sell things and services • Etsy • Kickstarter • Airbnb	Social Streams: Platforms that focus on sharing content with people on the web • Twitter • Pheed • App.net	Location: Platforms and applications that allow people to share their geographic location • Foursquare • Dopplr • Sonar	Nicheworking: Platforms that focus on communication between a small, select group of people or friends • Path • Diaspora • Goodreads
Enterprise social media: Platforms for internal communication among company employees • Yammer • Chatter • Socialcast	Wiki: Platforms that serve as an encyclopedia that are mostly free and can be edited by users • Wikipedia • Wikispaces • Wikia	Discussion Boards: Platforms similar to traditional "forums" where members or guests can post questions or comments • 4chan • Linqia • Google Groups	Business: Platforms mostly used for business networking and career-related purposes • LinkedIn • XING • Plaxo	Service Networking: Online freelancing platforms where people can also communicate with other users for collaboration • Elance • Freelancer.com • Designcrowd
Reviews & Ratings: Platforms that allow people to rate or comment on any service, product, concept, etc.	Social Curating: Platforms that allow people to collect and display digital content that they are interested	Video: Platforms that allow people to share and comment on videos and watch others' videos	Content/Documents: Platforms that allow people to share and comment on textual or visual documents and	Events: Platforms that allow people to jointly organize or plan events • Eventbrite

• Yelp • Angie's List • Epinions.com	in • Pinterest • Flipboard • Scoop.it	• YouTube • Vimeo • Dailymotion	read/download others' documents • SlideShare • Scribd • Docstoc	• Placast • meetup
Music: Platforms that allow users to listen to and share their favorite music • Last.fm • Pandora • Shazam	Livecasting: Platforms that allow users to live broadcast video/audio, etc. • Livestream • Ustream • Justin.tv	Pictures: Platforms that allow users to store, share, and comment on pictures • Picasa • Flickr • Instagram	Social bookmarks: Sites that allow users to bookmark their favorite sites and publicly share these favorites • Evernote • Del.icio.us • Pocket	Influence: Sites that measure how much social influence individuals or institutions have • Klout • Kred • Twitalyzer

Table 3.2 Social Media Platforms. Source: Brian Solis & JESS3 (theconversationprism.com.)
Author's note: As comprehensive as it is, with 20 categories and about 70 examples, the table lacks some other types of popular social media sites including group chatting applications (LINE, WhatsApp, WeChat), forums (2channel), virtual support communities (diabetes and cancer support communities), online social networks managed by brands (mystarbucksidea.com and AMEX open forum for businesses), virtual worlds (Second Life), collaboration sites (InnoCentive, Concurrent Versions System, Bugzilla), and social gaming platforms (GREE, DeNA, World of Warcraft).

The table above indicates that almost any interactive website or smart phone application that allows its members/users to create or share content can be considered social media. This can be explained by three major factors. First, it is becoming increasingly easier to create interactive websites that enable users to share content and interact with other users on the same platform (there are actually website templates that can become an independent online social network, e.g. ning.com). Second, it is cheaper and more profitable for websites to have users create content and at the same time spend a lot of time browsing others' content. Third, major social networks such as Facebook share their user information with other sites and provide social plugins to be embedded on a regular site or an application. This means a web site that requires its members to login with their Facebook accounts and share their activity on Facebook can still be considered social even though the site itself may be very simple: e.g., a site for Flash games or a data storage site. As a matter of fact, the original social media typology created by Brian Solis and JESS3 has one more category called "quantified self" that includes socially integrated applications such as MapMyFitness and RunKeeper, both of which have Facebook plugins and empower users to share their exercise activities and progress with their friends and family.

Another way to look at social media is whether it connects either strangers or people who already know each other in real life. As Paul Adams[6] suggested, we all have friends, family, relatives, classmates, coworkers, and interest groups. However, among these, interest groups are structurally different because one can have many different interests at the same time and can change interest groups often. Such groups are also likely to have the weakest ties among members because unlike family relationships people tend to not stick with their interest group members for a long time. By looking at the table above, we can conclude that a huge majority of the platforms are actually interest networks that bring together people who have common interests or benefits (photography, music, video, freelancing, and so on). Additionally, users don't need to know other users in real life to enjoy the content or interact with the content creators. In that sense, all social media channels can be classified into two groups: social networks and interest networks.

Social Networks	To communicate with friends, family, and preexisting contacts Mostly real identity is used High self-disclosure Strict privacy settings are used Social "presence" and "relationships" are important Conversation topics can be personal and private Everyone is at the center of his/her own network

	One's direct and indirect connections are mapped onto a social graph Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+
Interest Networks	To enjoy the interest area, get support from other members, or mass distribute content or ideas Using real identity is not important Low self-disclosure Privacy settings are not important Content sharing and groups are very important Conversations are public and mostly about the interest area. Conversations can develop very quickly (e.g., the Arab Spring, celebrity rumors on Twitter) Interests are at the center of the network and people gather around interests Interest graph shows how people with similar interests are connected Examples: Twitter, Pinterest, Quora, Digg, YouTube

Table 3.3. Social Media Typology

The Rules of Social Media

There are no official rules of social media that have been scientifically tested and proved; however, it would be useful for social media readers to know these basic concepts:

1-10-100 Rule

This rule was proposed before the mass popularity of today's social media sites. In 2006, the *Guardian* reported[7] that there was a huge gap between the number views on YouTube and the number of video uploads. There were about 100,000,000 daily video views versus only 65,000 video uploads a day. Similarly, the article pointed out that 50% of Wikipedia posts were edited by a dismal .7% of users. It was concluded that in online communities usually only 1% of the users create content (creators)[8], 10% actively react (contributors), and about 90% just observe (lurkers) .

Sturgeon's Law

This idea was not related to social media when it was originally proposed by Theodore Sturgeon in the 1950s. Sturgeon suggested that 90% of all published material was crud (useless).[9] Today, it is also argued that most content we get on media platforms is noise, or just irrelevant messages.

Frictionless Sharing

This is a concept coined by Marc Zuckerberg[10] that simply means people share digital content if it is convenient to do so for the sharer and non-intrusive for the receiver. Social media platforms should make it very easy for users to send messages to others or distribute their content without disrupting their online experiences. Sometimes this convenience may even arise from automatically sharing things without waiting for an approval from the account holder.

Social media empowered us to share any communication message with hundreds if not thousands or millions of people with a push of a button (or automatically). Actually, sharing things was also possible in the past, as most of today's social media sites existed in primitive forms in one way or another. According to B.J. Mendelson,[11] there was sixdegrees.com instead of Facebook, Geocities instead of Wordpress, and shareyourworld.com instead of YouTube. Many people perhaps still remember those chain mails that read, "Please forward this message to ten people that you know to help_____," which is not so different from sharing a message on Facebook or Twitter. However, what is different in today's social media is frictionless sharing: there is no effort and complication involved to create and share messages compared to the past. People do not have to send messages one by one to their friends and they don't have to edit, arrange, and put into a DVD to share their pictures and videos. A person also does not have to send an email to a friend if he liked his friend's recent photo on a blog; today the Like button or a few words in the comment box can handle this. Because of the simplicity of the sharing process, people also may think it is less intrusive to share things about their lives with others. As a result, every year what we share in social media increases by one hundred percent.[12]

On the other hand, the future of frictionless sharing may be in jeopardy.[13] In 2010, Facebook introduced an Open Graph that allowed people not only to connect with other users but also with things or web sites or brands by clicking Like.[13] This meant that Facebook could be both a social network and an interest network, so people who are interested in one brand or one web site can also be mapped. In the following year, in addition to getting Likes, developers were also given the green light to make applications that can show other activities of Facebook users such as "listening," "reading," and "watching." However, most of these applications started posting on users' timeline on their behalf, which may irritate some. For instance, not everyone who reads a news article may want to share with friends and family the fact that he or she read that article; yet a newspaper application can post "_____ read the article _____" on the user's timeline. Nowadays, these types of applications seem to be regulated strictly, but still, with socially integrated smartphone apps that track wherever we go, and are capable of recording whatever we do, it troubles many to think that most of this information can be shared automatically with friends and family.

Social Media Adoption

Generally speaking, social media is used more often by females,[14] young people,[15] opinion seekers,[16] and people who score high on extroversion, openness to new experiences,[15] Internet self-efficacy,[17] and the needs for belongingness and collective self-esteem. When it comes to switching to a different social media platform or using a social media channel for the first time, studies show that perceived security, interface attractiveness,[18] peer influence, and switching costs[19] are important. Choudary[20] adds the *network effect* into the equation. This is commonly known as the *rich-get-richer phenomenon*: the larger the network the higher the probability that new people will join. It also suggests that when social media platforms get too big, the network effect can actually be negative. According to Choudary, a large online social network is initially more attractive because it contains a) more people who may be potential new connections, b) more content creators, and c) more people who can be new potential followers. However, as shown in the following table, there are some downsides of being in a large network.

Connection	*Curating*	*Personalization*	*Clout (Influence of powerful users)*
More users means more unsolicited connection requests and higher security concerns	There will be a low signal-to-noise ratio as people's profiles or timelines will be flooded with uninteresting content	Creating algorithms for personalized content becomes more difficult	Big social networks usually have established influential users with a good reputation; it becomes increasingly difficult for new users to gain social credibility in social media (i.e., clout)

Table 3.4. The Network Effects. Derived from Choudary's article on thenextweb.com.

The table above puts special emphasis on signal-to-noise ratio and content personalization. On the other hand, personalization of social media is not always favored. For instance, an article on TheNextWeb.com titled "Will the Personalized Web Destroy Discovery?"[21] argues that personalized content based on algorithms does not make much sense and is a big obstacle to discovering useful new information on the web. In other words, if YouTube always recommends videos that are similar to what we have been watching, we will never have a chance to discover new, interesting content.

CHAPTER IV

Theoretical Explanations of Social Media Use

Social Capital Theory

Proponents of social capital theory claim that individuals have a natural tendency to interact with other members of society and build functioning networks that usually result in physical, informational, financial, or other forms of gains for all members.[1] Although in general the term *social network* is associated with homogenous groups with strongly knit ties, Granovetter's famous study[2] "The Strength of Weak Ties" made it clear that weak connections within a network might actually be more beneficial and boost social capital. There can be two different types of social capital one can gain from social networks:

- *Bonding social capital*: Gained by forming networks with strong ties. These kinds of networks tend to incluDeclose family members and close friends.

- *Bridging social capital*: Gained by forming networks with weak ties. These kinds of networks tend to include distant family members and distant friends.

Facebook can help people turn latent ties into weak ties, thus creating social capital.[3] The platform is also used for bridging among distant friends and bonding among close friends, which can also be considered emotional support.[4] It was found that there is a positive correlation between number of friends on Facebook and social capital building, in addition to the positive relationship between social wellbeing and the amount of Facebook use.[4] Facebook can expand social capital because it can both supplement and substitute (in case people with strong ties are geographically dispersed) face-to-face relationships and enable bonding in different circumstances.[5] However, usage intensity is not necessarily related to social provisions such as alliance, guidance, and attachment. Similarly, bridging is more common with close friends rather than distant friends, as usually the opposite is expected from Facebook use.[3]

Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory

According to Everett Rogers, who coined the name, diffusion of new ideas, services, and products follows a course of five stages, and each innovation must have five key characteristics. The stages of the Decision to adopt an innovation are knowledge, persuasion, Decision, implementation, and confirmation. Additionally, in order for an innovation to reach the critical mass, it must be relatively advantageous, compatible, simple, observable, and triable. In 2010, Coursaris and his colleagues[7] successfully applied DOI theory to the adoption of Twitter by college students and university staff. They observed that individual innovativeness, along with perceived compatibility, visibility, and popularity significantly predicted Twitter usage among the sample. Studies also found a link between compatibility, relative advantage, complexity, and ease of trying with interest in social networking.[8] A study[9] that investigated how Internet applications spread among college students via Facebook recommendations concluded that word of mouth and passive observation have the same level of impact on the adoption of innovation.

Similar to two-step flow theory, DOI emphasizes the importance of influentials and proposes that endorsements from opinion leaders and innovators are crucial during the early stages of innovation. In other words, DOI suggests that innovations have the optimum chance of being spread if early adopters or an early majority consists of influential people. To date, a number of studies have attempted to identify influencers on Twitter.[11,12] It became apparent that opinion leaders do not use online social networks in the same way as regular users. After surveying 451 college students, researchers[12] concluded that opinion leaders tend to share more brand information but spend less time on Facebook.

Uses & Gratification (U&G) Theory

People's media choices depend on the social or psychological needs that they want to satisfy at any given moment.[13] Although these needs seem to vary greatly, they can be classified into five categories: cognitive needs (information gathering, surveillance, understanding of the environment), affective needs (aesthetics,

emotional experiences), personal integrative needs (confidence-building, credibility), social integrative needs (relationships with friends and family), and tension-release needs (escapism, diversion). It is also known that one's personality can predict the priority of these needs. For instance,neuroticism usually increases the preference for violent TV programming and content that satisfies tension[14]-release needs[15] (things related to escape from reality and diversion). By the same token, people with high levels of openness to new experiences seek more entertaining activities.[15]

Additionally, the theory posits that users actively seek out and select different media channels based on their personal characteristics and needs. As the theory suggests, major individual characteristics such as age[16] and gender[17] are known to influence social media use. Whether people actively or passively use social media also depend on "innovativeness," a personal characteristic that sets users apart.[18] In the same vein, gender and personal traits determine what benefits are sought from online social networks[19] and the way people watch and share YouTube videos depends on what kind of personal tendencies they have, such as locus of control, thrill-seeking, and disinhibition.[20]

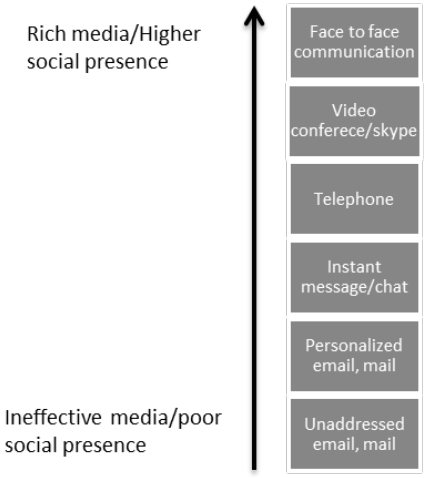
When it comes to Facebook, many studies refer to U&G theory to explain the motivations of use of the platform.[21] For instance several focus-group studies showed that the major driver of social network usage was to gratify one's need for socialization.[22] The study revealed that Facebook and Myspace were used to satisfy five major social needs: efficient and convenient communication, curiosity, desire for popularity, relationship-building, and relationship maintenance. These findings are in line with Joinson,[16] who named these social needs as *social network surfing*, *social investigation*, *social connection*, *shared identities*, and *content and status updating*. Joinson drew attention to the variation in needs and satisfaction levels of users based on their demographics and privacy settings. Apparently the reasons to use Facebook differ between younger and older people, as well as those with strict privacy settings and those with loose ones. Another study[23] identified three additional dimensions of human motives to use Facebook, which are diversion (passing the time, taking a break, escapism), personal motives (self-presentation, impression management), and informational motives (information-seeking, information-sharing, surveillance, social investigation, social sneaking). Twitter's continuance[7] was also explained by uses and gratifications theory: perceived diversion and relaxation in addition to mobile accessibility can explain whether the users will quit.

Social Presence and Media Richness Theories

Social presence theory posits that media channels that increase one's social presence are more effective.[24] In general, interactive and visual information cues increase social presence while non-interactive and textual cues Decrease social presence. The three major dimensions of social presence are social context (familiarity with recipients, formality and informality of relationships, and user characteristics), online communication (computer literacy, degree of nonverbal communication capability of the platform, etc.) and interactivity (synchronous or asynchronous communication, length of messages, size of groups, and type of tasks).[24]

Similar to social presence theory, media richness theory suggests that media channels that allow us to use multiple information cues (audio, video, etc.), provide immediate feedback, and send personalized messages are richer and thus more effective.[25] The theory presumes that users will always choose a richer media channel over more primitive media channels to transfer their messages. Both social presence and media richness theories postulate that face-to-face communication is the richest form of communication as shown in the following figure:[25]

Figure: 4.1 Rich Media Explained



Impression Management Theory

In 1959, Erving Goffman published a book[26] about self-presentation and argued that our lives are not different than theatrical performances where we "act" to control, maintain, or create images based on the audiences we interact with. Different from a theater stage, audience members may be imaginary and the actors may or may not receive immediate feedback from the audience. Acting occurs during the first impressions but they are extended to all parts of our lives. The following excerpt provides a summary of Goffman's thoughts:

> *When an individual appears before others his actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have. Sometimes the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response he is concerned to obtain. Sometimes the individual will be calculating in his activity but be relatively unaware that this is the case. Sometimes he will intentionally and consciously express himself in a particular way, but chiefly because the tradition of his group or social status require this kind of expression and not because of any particular response (other than vague acceptance or approval) that is likely to be evoked from those impressed by the expression. Sometimes the traditions of an individual's role will lead him to give a well-designed impression of a particular kind and yet be may be neither consciously nor unconsciously disposed to create such an impression* (page 7).

In addition to Goffman's doctrine that all social agents must have a congruent and consistent public image, it is claimed[27] that people commonly use ingratiation (trying to be likeable by complimenting others or helping others), self-promotion/enhancement (focus on individual achievements and competences), supplication (to appear weaker in order to get help from others), conformity (acting in a way or saying things according to social norms), and self-monitoring (paying attention to the positive feedback from others) techniques as part of impression management. We know that from the early age of the Internet people have been building personal webpages for self-promotion.[28] Research[29] also confirmed that people actively try to maintain a positive image on Facebook in order to get different kinds of support, including emotional, informational, esteem, companionship, and physical and financial support, although another study found that this is mostly true for people who have low self-esteem and score high on narcissism.[30]

Social Movements Theory

Social movements[33] driven by collective action are heavily impacted by public framing of the movements and the mobilization of resources (time, money, staff, volunteers, information, etc.) needed by the participants.

Framing in particular—building public and media support, creating sense of community and solidarity, reflecting an image of a movement formed by many different sections of society, etc.—plays a huge role in the success of social movements. Nowadays "social media technologies have been used especially in organizing and implementing collective activities, promoting a sense of community and collective identity among marginalized group members, creating less-confined political spaces, establishing connections with other social movements, and publicizing causes to gain support from the global community."[34 (page 1207).] An analysis of social media messages sent during the Egyptian revolution showed that social media not only helped the mobilization of people and information but also stimulated the protesters, who received sympathy and encouragement through social media from those who were far away.[34]

Similarly, the way social media was utilized by the Occupy Wall Street demonstrators[35] clearly showed that resource mobilization was achieved by locally targeted (geotagged) tweet messages (e.g., where people could find food, tents, etc.), and public support was built by the rest of the messages. The following excerpt from Clay Shirky's piece in *Foreign Affairs*[36] illustrates quite nicely why social media eases mobilization of resources:

> *Social media can compensate for the disadvantages of undisciplined groups by reducing the costs of coordination. The anti-Estrada movement in the Philippines used the ease of sending and forwarding text messages to organize a massive group with no need (and no time) for standard managerial control. As a result, larger, looser groups can now take on some kinds of coordinated action, such as protest movements and public media campaigns that were previously reserved for formal organizations. For political movements, one of the main forms of coordination is what the military calls "shared awareness," the ability of each member of a group to not only understand the situation at hand but also understand that everyone else does, too. Social media increase shared awareness by propagating messages through social networks. The anti-Aznar protests in Spain gained momentum so quickly precisely because the millions of people spreading the message were not part of a hierarchical organization.*[(p. 7)]

Self-Affirmation Theory

Similar to cognitive dissonance theory, self-affirmation theory proposes that people in general strive to maintain their self-confidence by engaging in activities that affirm their self-identities and increase their perception of self-worth.[37] A study from Cornell University[32] provided empirical evidence to the two main axioms of the theory by analyzing Facebook users. The findings concluded that a) exposure to one's own Facebook profile right after a threat is likely to reduce one's self-defensives and b) people are likely to spend more time on Facebook when their egos are threatened. The author explained the findings with the self-affirming nature of Facebook profiles.

Herding, Information Cascade & Social Influence

Although there are many other theories that can explain social networking behavior and the effects of social media, one must understand the concept of *herding* to get a good sense of why some strange things like the Harlem Shake are happening on the Internet. Herding, a term derived from zoology, simply means mimicking others' behavior without any cognitive activity. It is defined as "the alignment of the thoughts or behaviours of individuals in a group (herd) through local interaction and without centralized "coordination." [38] Herding is also related to *information cascade*, a term for when people ignore their own information and preferences and follow the behavior of the majority.[39] Information cascade usually happens when things need to be Decided in sequence. For instance, if a teacher asks each student one by one whether he or she wants the final exam to be held during the first or second semester, the answers of the first few students are pretty much likely to determine what the tenth student will say. This may also happen randomly. If there are two restaurants that are empty and the first passerby chooses to go to restaurant A, the second passerby is more likely to go to restaurant A, and so on. At the end of the night the first restaurant may end up getting 30 customers while

restaurant B closes empty. [40]Completely random and strange memes can go viral on the Internet just because people thoughtlessly copy others.

Some scholars claim that herding is related to an animal instinct: when animals escape from predators, each member of the herd moves with the rest of the herd and tries to be as close as possible to the center to be safe. [41]Other scholars point to *mirror neurons*, brain cells that make us empathize with others and mimic others' activities [38] (e.g., when someone yawns, we start yawning uncontrollably). Psychologists refer to the norm of conformity as a source of social influence; we do what the majority does because acting this way holds the society together, strengthens our bonds with the rest of our social group, and makes our lives easier. [42] Social conformity can be hugely influenced by our culture, as people in collective cultures conform more and are more careful about acting according to social norms. Two years ago, we conducted an experiment among Japanese respondents in which people were asked what they would have done if they had found $10,000 on the street. One group saw a board displaying most of the previous respondents' answers as "I would take it to the police." The other group also saw the same board but we varied most answers to "I would take it myself." People in the second group were seven times more likely to give the answer "I would take it myself."[42]

Figure 4.2 Condition I & II

Condition 1: I would give it to the Police.

Condition 2. I would take it.

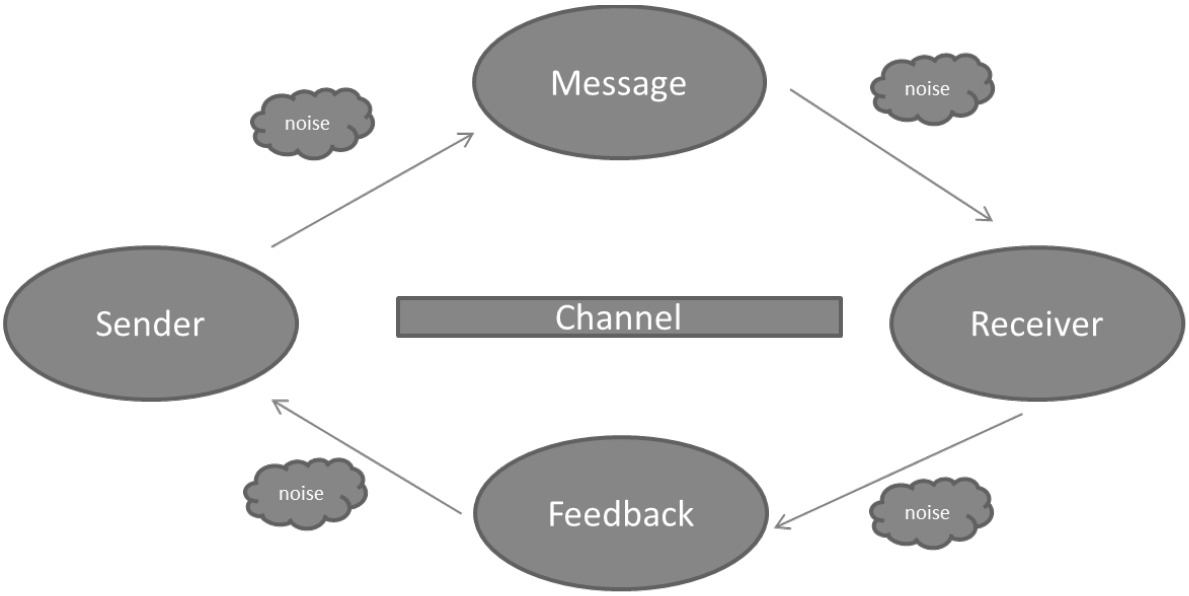
CHAPTER V

Human Communication and Social Media

"What is communication?" is a question that scholars from different domains have been trying to answer for centuries, and that has guided human progress since the emergence of language. Ross Buck[1] refers to communication as "the process by which the behavior of one animal, the sender, influences the behavior of another, the receiver" and considers the displays of motivation and emotion as the basic form of communication inherent in all social species. While most animals communicate with each other in unique ways, such as bees dancing to indicate direction and whales using sounds as social cues,[2] humans have the most recognizably developed cognitive aptitude among all animals, as evidenced by the development of spoken and written language (e.g., clay tablets of the Sumerians from circa 3500 BC), which became the integrating operator of the social system.[3]

Although there are several definitions of communication—"the sharing of experience"[4]; "process or act of transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver"[5]; "a process through which persons create, maintain and alter social order, relationships and identities"[6]— the majority of definitions share the meaning of "transmission of messages from senders to receivers." Since there are several definitions, it is better to look at the *communication model* that is widely cited in communication books.[4] According to this model, any communication activity involves at least one sender and one receiver who code (create) and Decode (interpret) a message respectively. Messages are usually sent by a channel, and the recipients send feedback upon receipt of the message. If we apply the model to YouTube, a video creator would be the sender, people who watch the video are receivers, the Internet and YouTube are the channels, video is the message form, and Likes/comments or flags are the feedback.

Figure 5.1 Interactive Communication Model. Source: Tubbs & Moss (2008)



An important part of this model is *noise*. Ideally there should be less noise than messages the recipient intends to receive; in other words, the signal-to-noise ratio should be high. However, in today's social media platforms this ratio may be very low. More importantly, there may be all different kinds of noise. Semantic noise is quite common since language used online is not natural and can be confusing (e.g., *brb* for *be right back*, *lol* for *laughing out loud*, etc.). Psychological noise may come in different forms including having a preference for videos with higher view counts and overlooking unpopular videos, even though view count may not always measure quality. Examples of physical or technical noise may include problematic audio or low broadband speed impeding users from watching a YouTube video.

Motivations for Communication

The purpose of human communication varies according to the respective schools of thought in the communication discipline. This purpose[2] has variously been described as "reduction of uncertainty," "creating and managing social knowledge," "increasing sense of self efficacy," "pleasure," "releasing tension and escaping from reality," "strengthening of information, knowledge and understanding of environment (cognitive)," "strengthening aesthetic, pleasurable and emotional experiences (affective)," "strengthening credibility, confidence, stability and status of the individual (personal integrative)," and "strengthening contact with family, friends and the world (social integrative)." All of these purposes and desires may actually be reduced to four basic communication needs: inclusion (we all want to belong to groups), affect (we want to be liked by the members of our group), control (we want to control our environment, including our social circle), and pleasure (we want to enjoy our interactions with our social group).[7] Beyond these reasons, we can also suspect that the need for communication is inherent and driven by survival instincts, such as reading the emotional cues of our family members to learn about our environment or exchanging information with our group members to get protected from predators. Perhaps that is why kids all around the world start pointing at objects around the age of one,[8] start speaking around two years of age,[9] and may never be able to speak a language if they do not talk to anyone before the age of twelve.[10]

The biological need to communicate can also be applied to social media use. A study[11] argued that there are six sociobiological reasons we use social media, as shown in the following table:

Table 5.1 Sociobiological Reasons for Social media Use

Social Grooming: Supporting group cohesion and reassuring others' existence
Gossip & Phatic Talk: Gossiping or phatic conversation (communicating just to maintain social relationship, not with a clear purpose, e.g. —*Hi!*, —*Hi!*)
Future Collaboration: Building friendship and gaining future cooperation by using any opportunity to add people to their online social network
Reputation Building: Acting more pro-socially while being watched because of a desire to build a good reputation (Those with a good reputation will be more likely to get help from others in the future.)
Survival: Presenting ourselves on different social networks to enhance our survival and reproductive options
Mating: Finding prospective mates (Men are more likely to show profiles that show status, such as cars or spending money, while women are more likely to show their relationship status and family-related info.)

Communication is a goal-driven activity and once we Decide what we expect from others we send out messages. We always seek information and try to reduce the anxiety that is driven by uncertainty over the future. We do this by defining our environment (description), predicting what is likely to happen (prediction), and explaining why things occur (explanation).[12] Although with our language abilities we can produce an unlimited number of speeches, there are only three types of statements we can make: Declarative (any kind of informational content), interrogative (any kind of question), and imperative (any kind of request such as a command, recommendation, suggestion, etc.).[13] Social media messages can also be classified according to these coding schemes. For instance, a study that coded Japanese and American college students' Twitter messages found that Americans post more question-type tweets than do the Japanese.[14] It was also found that Japanese Facebook users post fewer negative Declarative statements on brands' Facebook walls compared to American Facebook users.[15] Based on the gender communication literature we can also hypothesize that males will post more imperative statements than females.

According to the book *Human Communication*, the two major dimensions of communication that heavily impact how we communicate are relationship and context.[4] The relationship dimension refers to the social roles and social power differences of the involved parties; for instance, a student may give exactly the same information to his or her teacher quite differently from how he or she shares it with friends. The context dimension is about the spatial element of communication, meaning where the communication is taking place and what kind of "communication atmosphere/mood" is present. Two acquaintances may talk to each other in different ways based on whether they are in class, at a birthday party, or at work. Formality and informality of conversation and the mood of the conversation change depending on the context. In social media, the context becomes irrelevant because a person who shares information and the recipients do not have to share the same environment. The relationship dimension however, becomes a huge challenge on the Internet, because naturally people would not want to share the same info in the same way and in the same frequency with their inner circle, family members and distant friends. To tackle with this problem, people may create multiple accounts with pseudonyms,[16] carefully use privacy settings, and use multiple platforms, in addition to limiting their information disclosure.

Similar to the relationship dimension of communication, our communication textbook[4] emphasizes the importance of audience characteristics and identifies four different types of communication depending on who our audience is: intrapersonal, interpersonal, mass, and small-group communication. Intrapersonal communication is communicating with oneself. For instance while writing a diary, we are communicating with ourselves; in this case we have no other audience members, so we can easily write down our secrets and deepest fears. Interpersonal communication involves interacting with people with whom we share certain relationships. Talking to a friend, we can be honest and direct, but our communication will be influenced by the relationship level with him or her and our expectations from the conversation. Small-group communication involves expressing ourselves in groups of between three and twenty people. In a group, our communication is

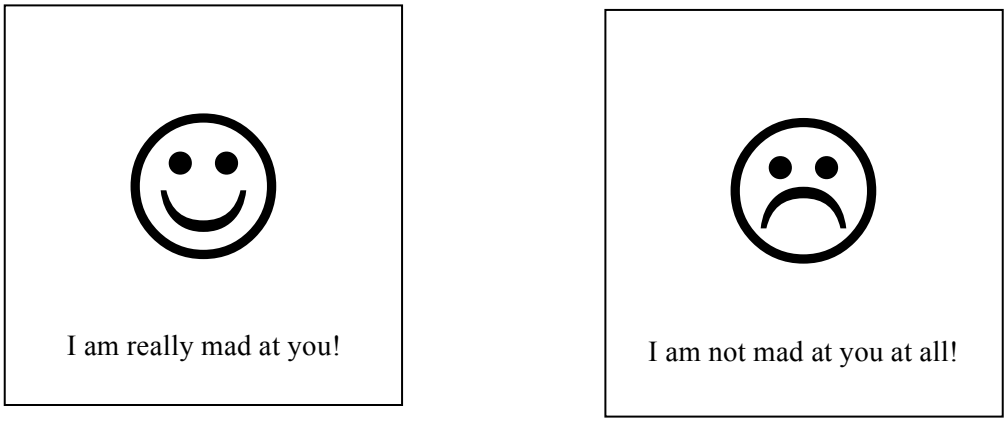
heavily affected by social norms and group dynamics (e.g., taking more risks, or following the leader's idea). The last is mass communication, which refers to one-way communication between an information source and a large audience. While making a speech in front of an audience, we construct our messages differently, because what we are doing differs from a simple conversation with people we know.

Social media can be considered a combination of interpersonal (one-to-one) and mass (one-to-many) communication. It is neither purely interpersonal because social media allows millions of people to interact with each other at the same time, nor purely mass communication because all audience members are presumed to be active and can actively respond to communication messages by Liking, rating, commenting, and even changing or editing the original messages. Hence social media is called a many-to-many style of communication.

Nonverbal & Computer-Mediated Communication

Human communication is not limited to spoken language only. Long before humans produced language, they communicated by nonverbal cues (sounds, gestures, facial expressions, etc.).[16] As a matter of fact, a researcher in 1970 claimed that 65% of all messages we send are actually nonverbal. Mehrabian[18] asserted that 93% of human communication is nonverbal (55% body language, 38% paralanguage such tone of voice, etc., and 7% spoken language), because we usually pay more attention and rely more on nonverbal than on verbal cues. For instance, if a person has an unhappy facial expression but says positive things about his situation, we conclude that person is actually unhappy; conversely, if someone shows a happy facial expression but says negative things about his or her situation, we may believe that those negative statements do not matter that much and the person must be happy inside.

Figure 5.2 Nonverbal Expressions



According to Mehrabian, we wouldn't believe that these statements reflect the inner feelings of the speaker because we always give priority to nonverbal messages.

Nonverbal communication's superiority over verbal communication is also explained by its long history in human civilization: before humans invented spoken language, they communicated with nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and simple sounds.[16] Another unique aspect of nonverbal communication is its continuity: in a conversation we may speak and utter words occasionally, but we constantly send nonverbal messages (our physical distance from the other party, facial expression, posture, etc.). Additionally, nonverbal communication is ideal for communicating human emotions and feelings, as this sort of communication is

usually spontaneous and natural. Verbal messages, on the other hand, can be more effective to convey the meaning of things that don't exist (e.g., dreams, imaginations, etc.).[16]

Computer-mediated communication (CMC), that is, any kind of communication activity where messages are transmitted through electronic devices rather than face-to-face interactions, may cause serious communication problems because of its limits on the transmission of nonverbal cues.[19] CMC also has two major aspects that make it a sensitive process: synchronicity (synchronous or simultaneous versus asynchronous or delayed messages) and anonymity (real versus hidden identities).[19] Synchronous communication where both parties can receive messages simultaneously without any delay and confirm the receipt of their messages generates higher communication satisfaction.[20] Anonymity on the Internet is a more complicated topic, as people in general expect others to present their real identities online, but conversely may not want to share their own identity and will self-disclose more information when their identities are anonymous.[21] Based on all this information, we can predict that social media platforms that enable participants to use anonymity and that utilize more nonverbal cues that can better transmit facial expressions and body language synchronously, such as enriched emoticons or video streaming, are more likely to be adopted by Internet users.

During the early years of the Internet, it was presumed that people just behave and communicate differently online compared to the real world because of the *online disinhibition effect*[22] (reduced self-control) explained below. Perhaps the biggest example of this difference would be introverts' being more active than extroverts online because, according to the social compensation hypothesis, cyberspace is more rewarding for them. However, this proposition is not accepted by all scholars. It is also plausible that extroverts can reach even more people by using online communication technologies. The following table summarizes the four common hypotheses about computer-mediated communication.

Table 5.2 Online Disinhibition Effect. Source: Suler (2004)

Dissociative Anonymity: Having an opportunity to be anonymous may subconsciously change us.
Invisibility: When we are anonymous we conceal our identity.
Asynchronicity: Emails or text messages are not synchronous; there are delays in the feedback we get from people we talk with. This makes people think the online world must be different.
Dissociative Imagination: Some people think the online world is a different world with different rules.
Different Personal Dispositions: Introverts may be more active and some people may not want to disclose anything at all.

Table 5.3 Four Hypotheses of Online Communication. Source: Lee (2009)

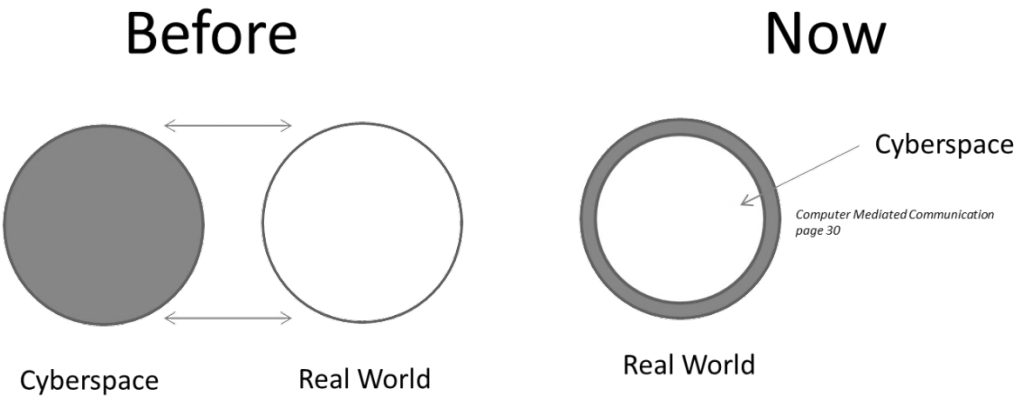
Displacement Hypothesis: The development of children and young people who communicate online is hindered because usually online communication reduces opportunities for offline communication. More time spent online means less time left for face-to-face communication.
Increase Hypothesis: The Internet increases our chances to reach and communicate with more people because it eliminates time and location barriers.
Rich-Get-Richer Hypothesis: The Internet is more beneficial for those who already have a large (rich) social network and strong social connections. They can grow social networks exponentially and discover new opportunities.
Social Compensation Hypothesis: The Internet is more beneficial for those who don't have a large social network. They can feel more comfortable online and build new social connections.

Whether spending time on the Internet is good or not, studies confirm that communicating online and offline may be a bit different. It was found that when negotiating via email people are more likely to lie compared to negotiations where people use handwritten notes.[24] By the same token, people who interact via email are less likely to cooperate compared to those who interact face-to-face. When people evaluate their peers' performance using computers, their appraisals are more likely to be negative compared to those who do the

evaluation in a paper-and-pencil format.[26] On the other hand, some similarities to real-life verbal communication also exist. For instance, people who feel guilty usually send long messages and people who feel angry tend to send short messages.[27] Similarly, females send longer and more complex SMS messages than males;[28] however, they don't necessarily use emoticons more frequently, even though they are known to be more emotionally expressive than males.[29]

Thurlow,[19] author of the book *Computer Mediated Communication*, suggests that nowadays the difference between online and offline worlds are blurred. This may be related to the age of the Internet: when it first emerged, the Internet was totally new to everyone, but in the digital age where almost everyone owns a cell phone and a PC, communicating online is part of everyday life. Supporting this argument, studies show that there are not many major differences between offline and online social networks. For instance, a Pew study[30] found that people have met 89% of their Facebook friends at least once. The same study also indicated that active Facebook users (those who interact with most other members) report higher life satisfaction and emotional support, the same effects of real-life friendships. Lastly, according to the Pew report, people tagged 6% of their Facebook friends in photos; if we presume that people are likely to tag their close friends, this percentage is very similar to Dunbar's 150 network members with close friends numbering between 4 and 6. However, contrary to these findings, it was recently found that one's life satisfaction can be successfully predicted by the person's offline social network group, but not by one's online social network group.[31]

Figure: Cyberworld and Real World-Then and Now. Copyright SAGE Publications (Thurlow et al., 2004)



CHAPTER VI

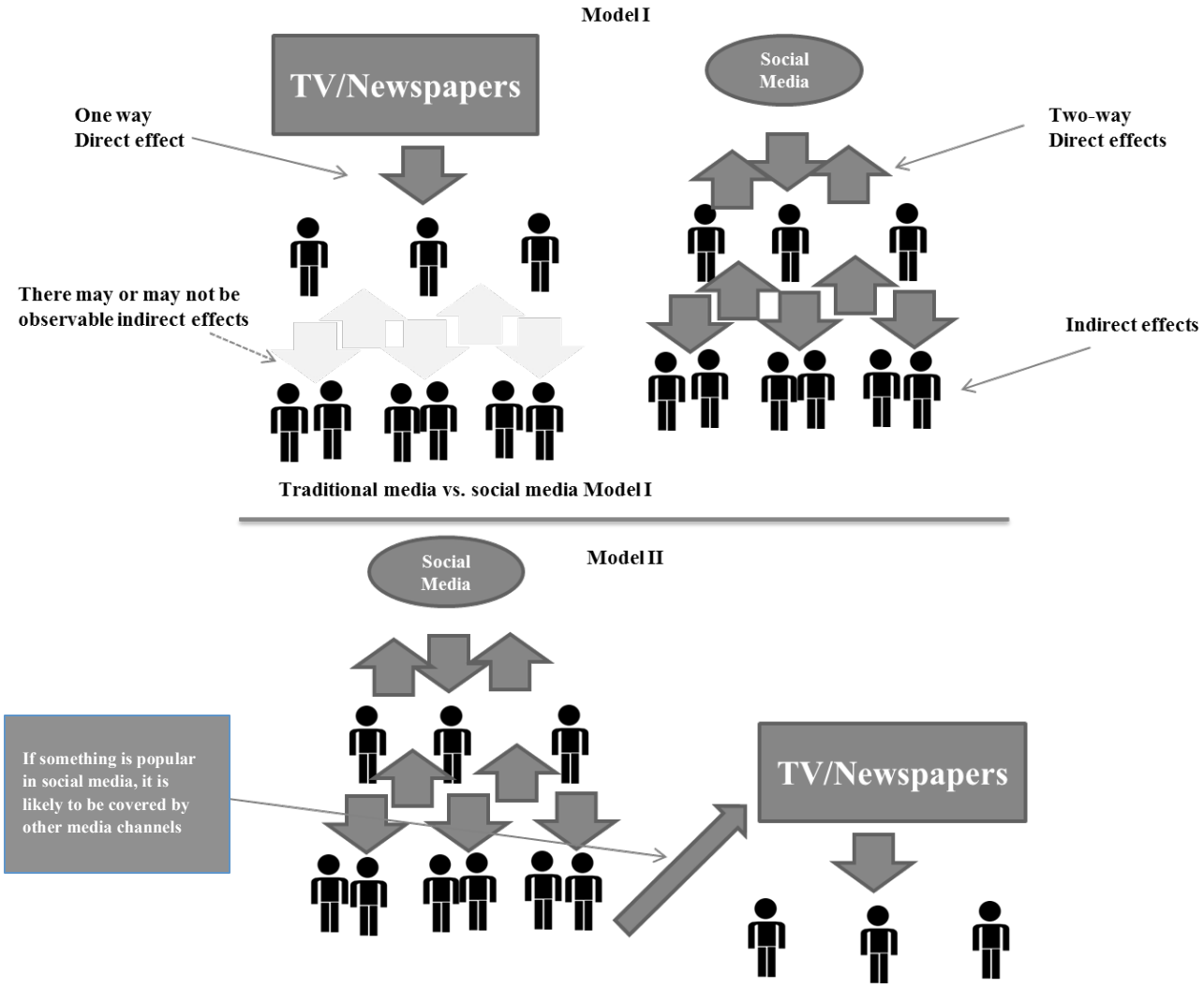
The Effects of Social Media

Past studies about media effects[1] mostly focused on how mass media changes society. It was presumed that exposure to one-way communication mediums such as TV can shape what people think is important rather than what really is important (agenda-setting theory[2]), and increase people's tolerance for violence and materialism (cultivation theory[3]). Media researchers also thought that there are many individual and situational factors that change how media influence each person. The following paragraphs outline the different dimensions of media effects based on Bryant and Oliver's seminal book *Media Effects*.[1]

Long-term and Short-term Effects: The effect of media messages wears off over time, as there can be short-term and delayed effects.[4] An example of a short-term effect can be *excitation transfer*,[5] meaning when we watch a comedy or a horror movie, we become aroused and even after the movie we may respond to our environment a bit differently. A typical example of a long-term effect is perhaps our distorted beliefs about gender roles and racial stereotypes based on how people are represented in mass media. Social media can also have short-term and long-term effects. To assess the short-term effects of Facebook use, a recent study[6] asked participants to either check articles on CNN.com or browse Facebook profiles and then choose between a chocolate chip cookie and a granola bar. Those who checked Facebook profiles were more likely to choose a chocolate chip cookie with high calories, meaning exposure to Facebook may reduce self-control (a short-term effect). The second leg of the same study also observed that people were more likely to give up on a challenging task right after browsing Facebook (a short-term effect). The final phase of the study found that respondents who heavily used social media had a higher credit-card debt and higher body mass index score (all long-term effects).

Direct and Indirect Effects:[7] Media can directly affect those who are directly exposed to its messages. The same media messages can also affect those not directly exposed to those messages but informed by the ones who are directly influenced. A typical example of direct and indirect effects would be an opinion leader's purchase of a fashionable T-shirt after seeing it in a magazine (direct effect) and his friends buying the same T-shirt after seeing him wear it or hearing him talk about it (indirect effects). As the following figure explains, in traditional media, indirect effects are not always present (only certain behaviors of opinion leaders are visible to only a small fraction of their friends, and opinion leaders do not always share their thoughts and feelings) and there is no interactivity between media source and message recipients. More importantly, in social media not only opinion leaders but also average users can drive indirect effects of messages.[8]

Figure 6.1 Social Media and Traditional Media



Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Effects: Exposure to media does not necessarily change one's behavior. It may be able to only change or slightly influence beliefs or attitudes.[9] If we want to measure the effects of a brand's social media page on users, we should measure attitudes toward the brand, beliefs about the brand, and intentions to buy that brand both before and after the exposure to that social media page or a social media campaign. The following *Affect, Behavior, and Cognition (ABC) model* [10] explains how human behavior is formed: attitudes influence our behavior which then influences our beliefs. Media can influence all these aspects of the Decision-making process.

Figure 6.2 The ABC Model

Attitudes→→→→→Behavior→→→→Cognition

Individual Differences: We actively select and are influenced by media messages based on our individual characteristics.[11] Below are listed some major individual characteristics that may explain why some people choose to use different media types or why some people are not influenced more by media messages:

- *Individual Needs*: People in general, seek the same stimulus after it has satisfied a particular need. It is also assumed that needs vary dramatically from person to person.[11]
    - *Need for Cognition*: Enjoyment of cognitive activities. This need can predict attention to news reports, or watching local news to gain information.[11]
    - *Sensation Seeking*: A biologically based need to seek out experiences that have the potential to elicit high levels of arousal. It can predict viewing and enjoyment of arousing or action-packed media such as horror films or violent programming.[12]
- *Other Needs*: Need for entertainment, humor, achievement, affiliation, as well as utilitarian (material and physical benefits) versus affective needs (social benefits).

Personality Traits: Personality traits refer to our disposition to behave in certain ways that are either inborn or gained during early childhood.[11] Communication scholars commonly use the Big Five traits (openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) and self-esteem to explain individual variation in media adoption and media effects.

- *Self-esteem:* In general social media boosts users' self-esteem;[13] however, excessive use of social media has been found[14] to lower self-esteem and body-esteem. We also found that people who have high self-esteem and low self-esteem do not use social media in the same way, as those who score high on self-esteem are less likely to include strangers into their online social networks.[15]
- *Big Five Traits*: Generally speaking, extroverts tend to use social media more frequently and have larger social networks.[15] People who score high on openness tend to share more info on the net and are more likely to try new services.[16] On the other hand, low neuroticism and high conscientiousness usually result in sharing less information about oneself in social media.[17]

Demographic differences: Simple individual differences such as age, gender, and location may explain why social media influences people differently.[18] For instance, cyberbullying or sexting may constitute a serious risk for younger users but not for older users. Today, about 8% of American teenagers report being bullied online and 90% of them indicate having witnessed someone bullying another person in social media.[19] Similarly, in a Texas high school, more than 20% of the students admitted to sexting (sending nude or semi-nude videos or sex-related texts) while more than 30% said they received sex-related messages[20] from friends (*N*=1034).

Societal Effects of Social Media

As explained in the first chapter, social media changed the way we interact with each other and the way we gather information about the world around us. However, before listing what has changed in our lives after the social media boom, we need to understand that it is difficult to dissect the social media effects, as there are no scientifically proven differences between Web 2.0, new media, and social media. Furthermore, recent changes in our lives may not be the results of social media use but of the mass adoption of the Internet or mobile communication devices.

Positive Effects

Cognitive Surplus

Clay Shirky,[21] whose research area is modern culture and social networks, claims that in the digital age we don't waste as much time watching television as we did in the mid-twentieth century. This, together with the fact that the web connects us to millions of people, means we now have extra time and capability to collaboratively create and produce original and useful content. He calls this extra time and capability *cognitive surplus*. Many crowd-funded projects like Wikipedia, InnoCentive, and open-source programs are the result of collaboration among people connected by broadband Internet and digital social networks that did not exist in the past. Shirky argues that people collaborate and create free online content because this helps them gain social capital and reputation.[21]

Because of the nature of the Internet, now the news is faster, cheaper, and less censored with the help of so-called citizen journalists. In the past, what was newsworthy was determined by reporters and editors and the media conglomerates that distributed the news. Today, average citizens, via web communities like Reddit and free public distribution channels like Twitter and YouTube, can determine what becomes news. Since anyone can be a one-person, fully functioning media entity by owning a TV channel (YouTube), a radio station (podcasts), a newspaper (Wordpress/Twitter), or a magazine (Flipboard), media conglomerates are not as powerful and audiences not as passive as they used to be. Clay Shirky emphasizes the importance of public civic participation, which was simplified by social media. With the new social platforms, forming a group and gathering new members— something that used to take days and months—is now very easy and very fast. According to Shirky, this is not because social media help people gather new members, but because such media remove barriers to forming a group. These two paragraphs were also included in the 1st chapter.

The following pyramid can explain low and high levels of Internet collaboration. At the bottom level, users create documents and upload them online. In the middle there are working groups with a specific task where members may or may not be visible. At the top, there are massive projects like Wikipedia where people from all around the world contribute to create an extensive database.

Figure 6.3 Mass Collaboration on the Internet. Source: Shah, 2010

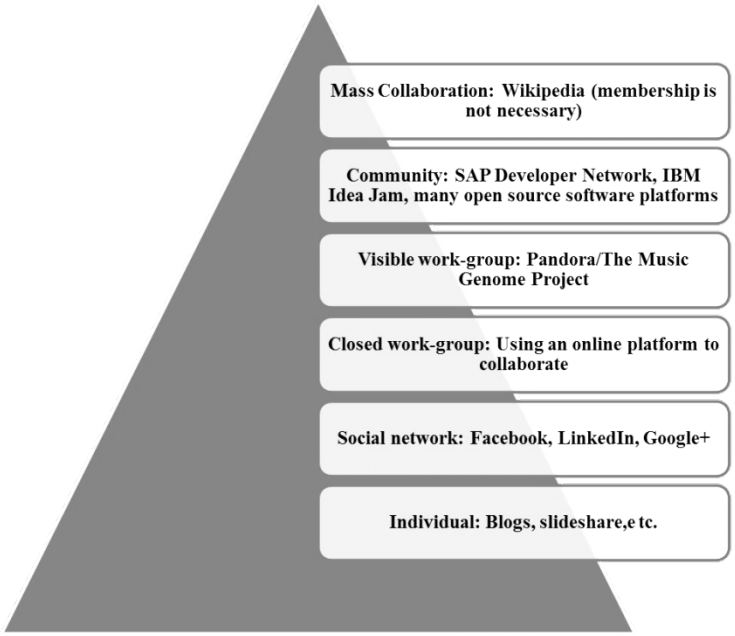
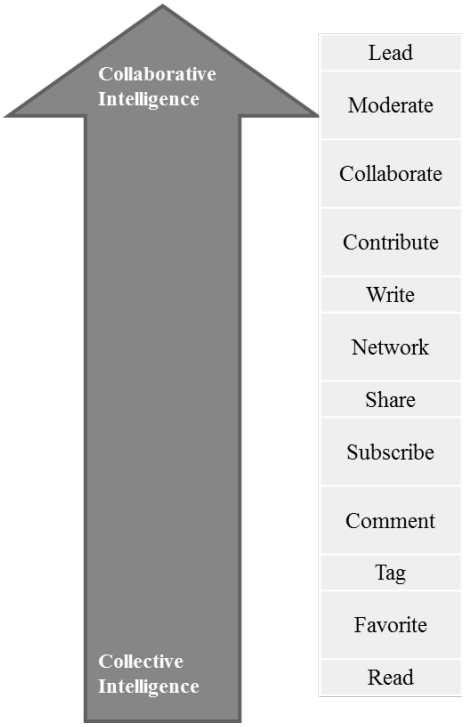


Figure 2 The Levels of Collaboration. Source: Mayfield, 2006



Political Participation

One should never overlook the effects of social media on social transformations and movements. For instance, the Arab Spring,[24] when mass protests toppled antidemocratic regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, is now considered to be a social media–driven political movement. Although Malcolm Gladwell[24] rejected the idea that social media can cause revolutions, as it couldn't in Iran, many researchers agree that social media was critical during the Arab Spring because a) political debates circulating prior to the events were driven by social media, b) an uptick in social media conversations was followed by an increased level of on-street activities, and c) with the help of social media, protesters garnered international support.[25] Social media will likely be a preferred tool for activism in the twenty-first century since it is not censored, can help people organize in a short time, and has strong immediate effects.

Negative Effects

Alone Together

Sherry Turkle, author of *Alone Together*, claims that by choosing to communicate with our network members through social media and new electronic devices we may get a sense of constant connectedness but actually we have begun to isolate ourselves. Having the digital presence of all of our network members at any given moment, we start treating others as social robots: we converse more but we pay less attention to the content. Particularly, adolescents who always hold their cellphones in their hands and who dislike face-to-face communication because it is beyond their control may never be able to develop Decent negotiation and communication skills because of their solitude and lack of emotional development.

Distortion of Reality

Being immersed into social media, we may eventually lose our perception of what is real and what is not. Generally speaking, we are hardwired to tell stories about ourselves and present ourselves publicly according to the image we want to build (this is known as *cultivating postures*). On Facebook people tend to omit their flaws and post only positive and appealing things about themselves.[26] Hiding all negative and unfortunate things prevents us from becoming more intimate with others. Frequently Facebook use may be detrimental, particularly for teenagers, because sometimes people may do things to match their Facebook image instead of posting things on Facebook to match their public image.[26] In other words, social media may negatively influence our identity development and confuse our understanding of others' identities because obviously things that are done online may or may not be faithful reflections of what happens offline. By the same token, Morozov ?style #(2009) proposed that we may feel good by participating in political movements on the Internet but these activities (e.g., clicking Like on a page, retweeting a message, etc.) may have no significant impact in real life. He coined the term *slacktivism*[27] to describe online activism that does not work.

All in all, it seems that social media, especially Facebook, may have both positive and negative effects on our lives.[28] Perhaps this excerpt from *Psychology Today* summarizes it best:

> *Facebook is a multi-edged sword riddled with many paradoxes. On the one hand, Facebook builds social connectivity ... but it also isolates people and creates situations where we are "alone together." Facebook can build self-esteem in a healthy way ... but it can also fuel narcissistic personality traits. Facebook can fortify friendships ... but it can also destroy relationships. The list goes on and on.*[28]

CHAPTER VII

Social Media & Social Innovations

Influence is defined as "the capacity or power of persons or things to be a compelling force on or to produce effects on the actions, behavior and opinions of others."[1] In simple terms, it is "the ability to cause a reaction in other people."[2] After studying real-life persuasion techniques in dozens of organizations, Robert Cialdini[3] found that we are more influenced by those similar to us (in age, gender, interest, etc.) and those in our social circle. Not all messages influence us the same way: those that follow existing social norms, messages already accepted by many others, and messages communicated by several different sources are more likely to affect us. (For example, we are more likely to start brushing our teeth if two friends recommend that we do so once than if one of our friends recommends it twice.) Cialdini put together six principles of influence summarized in the following table:

Table 8.1 Cialdini's Principles of Influence

Social proof**:** People are more likely to change their behavior if they see others doing the same thing. An experimenter had tested the influence of crowds on strangers by asking his assistants to stand on the street and just look at a building. In the first condition, there was only one person looking at the building and only four percent of passersby stooped. In the second condition, there were fifteen people standing on the street and looking at a building; and in that condition ten times more people (forty percent) stopped and looked at the building themselves.[4]
Reciprocity**:** People are influenced by those who recently did them a favor. This is the technique used in supermarkets, as when people get a free sample of cheese they may feel they received a favor from the person who is sampling and now should return the favor by buying a pack. In general we also pay attention to the messages of those we recently received a favor from.
Commitment**:** When people make a choice on anything, it becomes difficult to change that choice (e.g., a product, political party, favorite music genre). It was found that when people were asked to wear a pin for a worthy cause and later to put a sign on their lawn, many accepted. However, in a similar neighborhood people were directly asked to put a sign on their lawn and the majority rejected.[3]
Authority & Credibility**:** We are more likely to be influenced by those in authority. In an experiment twenty-six out of forty subjects accepted an order to deliver a deadly shock to a person because they were asked to do so by an authority.[5] Many commercials use experts because their opinion is more credible, and thus can make us buy the advertised products.
Liking**:** We are more influenced by those whom we like. Cialdini argues that some companies (e.g., Tupperware and Amway) build their customer base by using mutual liking among people. He also argues that we tend to like attractive people, who also influence us more. A recent study found that when shoppers see an attractive person touching a product in a store, they are more likely to evaluate that product positively.[6]
Scarcity**:** People tend to be influenced by a sales message that says the product is scarce or the offer is available for only a limited time or to a limited number of people.

Additionally, young people and women are known[7] to be more susceptible to influence, women can influence men more than they influence other women, and married people are less susceptible to influence than single people. Influential people themselves, however, are not as susceptible to influence, and they tend to cluster together with other influential people. When we asked Twitter users in Japan[8] whether they tried a new service or a product after finding out about it on Twitter, we found that females and young users were significantly more likely to report doing so, confirming the age and gender-related propositions mentioned above.

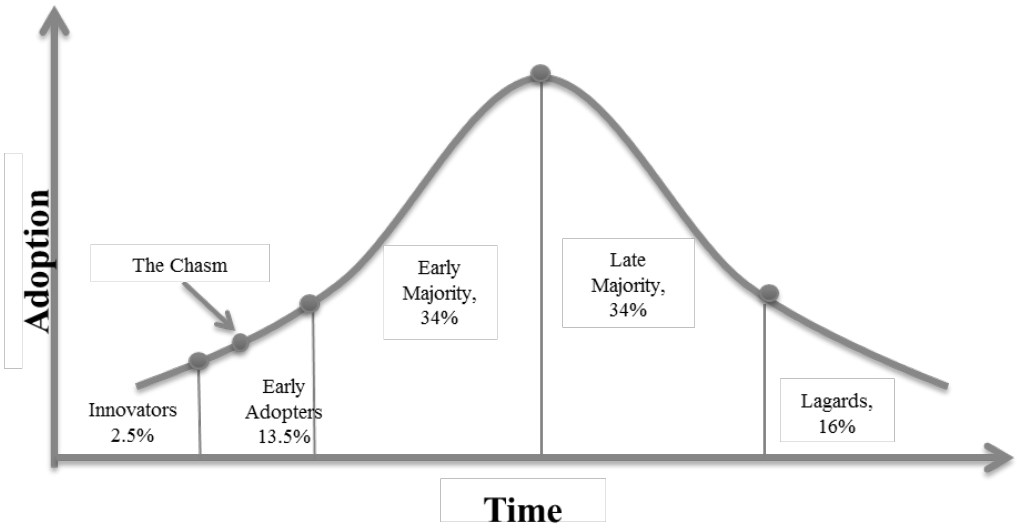
Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory & Social Influence

Everett Rogers,[9] who developed DOI theory, argued that diffusion of new ideas, services, and products happens in five stages and each innovation must have five key characteristics. These five stages of the Decision to adopt an innovation are as follows:

- *Knowledge*: Acquiring information about the innovation
- *Persuasion*: Being persuaded that the innovation is useful
- *Decision*: Making the Decision to adopt the innovation
- *Implementation*: Using the innovation
- *Confirmation*: Continue using it without quitting after a few times

Rogers stated that for all innovations there exists an approximate percentage of innovators (2.5%) early adopters (13.5%) and laggards (16%) as shown in the figure below. These percentages, however, may be subject to culture (the percentage of innovators and early adopters is 16% in the United States, 24% in the United Kingdom, and 9% in Spain).[10] Additionally, Geoffrey Moore[11] introduced the concept of the *chasm*, the gap between early adopters and the early majority. If a new innovation cannot cross the threshold of about 16% (the chasm), it may never be adopted by the rest of the population.

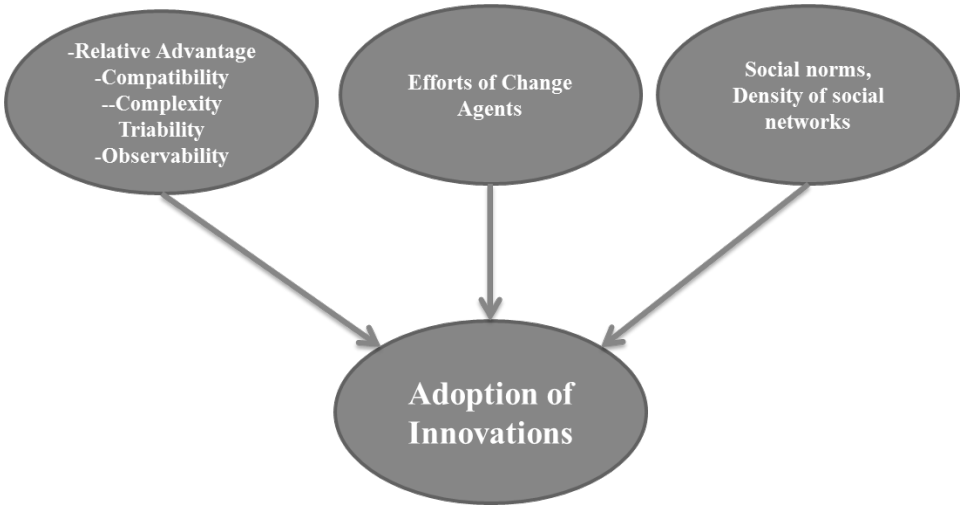
Figure 8.1 Diffusion of Innovations Source: Reproduced based on the graph in Rogers, 2004, p. 281. Copyright Simon & Schuster



Innovators: Technology enthusiasts, tech bloggers, etc. They are not very rich or opinion leaders. They tend to be young, self-confident, mobile, and not brand-loyal.
Early Adopters: These people also can be considered agents of change, as they influence the rest of society. They are heavy users of the product category. Marketers should identify and offer free trials to this group.
Early Majority: Once the innovation is adopted by innovators and early adopters, these people feel comfortable trying it. This group relies on ads and expert or celebrity endorsements.
Later Majority: This group usually has lower levels of income and adopts innovations just because the product is used by many others.
Laggards: Skeptics. They adopt innovations mostly because they don't have any other alternative. Promotions for this group should emphasize the innovation's similarity to existing products (it can do everything that similar products can do).

In order to reach the critical mass, an innovation must be a) relatively advantageous compared to currently available products and services with similar functions, b) compatible with currently available supplementary products and services, c) simple to use, d) observable, and e) easy to try. Some authors also argued that social norms, the efforts of change agents, and the density of social networks in a society also play a crucial role when it comes to adoption of new innovations.

Figure 8.2 Adoption of Innovations. Source: Rogers (2004).



A study found that individual innovativeness, along with whether people think Twitter is compatible, visible, and popular, predicted who will keep using Twitter and who will quit.[13] In the same vein, people who thought online social networking is advantageous, simple, and easy to try reported that they were interested in trying social network services.[14] An analysis of the spread of Internet applications among college students via Facebook recommendations showed that passive observation may have as much impact as word of mouth on the adoption of a new application.[15] To understand the spread of hobbies in social media, researchers also followed students for four years at a university and found that interest in jazz and classical music is contagious: when people share a residence with or major in the same field as someone who likes classical or jazz music they tend to develop interest in these genres.[16] At the same time, people on the same campus who share similar interests and hobbies may also end up becoming Facebook friends.

Similar to two-step flow theory[17] (the notion that new ideas are first adopted by opinion leaders, who then pass them on to their network members), DOI theory emphasizes the importance of *influentials*; it holds that endorsements from opinion leaders and innovators are crucial during the early stages of innovation.[9] In other words, innovations have the optimum chance of spreading if early adopters or the early majority consists of influential people. Recently it was found[18] that influentials were responsible for the spread of the Occupy movements across the United States, although hidden influentials (accounts created particularly for that movement) were also effective. The study indicated that influentials not only reach a large number of audiences, they also receive many different messages from a vast number of sources. As Brian Solis, co-author of *The Rise of Digital Influence*, explains, it is better for companies with a limited advertising budget to reach influential people who then can influence their network members rather than reaching average users who may or may not influence anybody.[19] It is not a coincidence that companies pay Kim Kardashian $10,000 to post a tweet that promotes a brand.[20] On the other hand, it may be the case that unpopular people use social media more often that popular people. Surveying 451 college students, researchers[21] concluded that opinion leaders tend to share more brand information but spend less time on Facebook.
There is no clear definition of an influencer/influential, as in the digital age anyone can influence others' opinion in some particular area or on a particular medium. According to Brian Solis,[19] influencers are "individuals who may possess the capacity to influence based on a variety of factors, such as a substantial or concentrated following in social networks, notable stature, or authority within a community, and the size or

loyalty of an audience." At the same time, two marketing professors coined the term *market mavens*,[22] people "who have information about many kinds of products, places to shop, and other facets of markets, and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information" and showed that they also can influence purchase Decisions. Based on the literature review, we introduce the following influence pyramid, which may be applicable to the adoption of commercial products and services.

Figure 8.3: Influence Pyramid

When it comes to influencing strangers online, perhaps it is better to focus on Twitter, as it stands out among other self-broadcasting tools.[23] The problem is, at the time of writing, a search for *Twitter + identify + influentials* returns more than a dozen papers with different criteria on how to identify influential people. For instance, a paper[2] that successfully explained the spread of new ideas during the Egyptian revolution and the Dominique Strauss-Kahn scandal identified sixteen different criteria (see the table below). Regardless, Paul Adams claims that all influentials should not be treated equally. He puts them into two groups based on their forwarding behavior: *innovator hubs* and *follower hubs*. Innovator hubs are considered to be the main info source by the public, but they are not open to new ideas and innovations and they usually don't share others' messages. Follower hubs, conversely, will accept new ideas and innovations and share people's messages. For an innovation to be adopted, it should be shared by follower hubs: easily influenced people who are highly connected to their groups.

Table 8.2 Criteria to Identify Influential Tweets

Account Characteristics: Daily tweet rate, followers-to-following ratio, number of lists the account is included in, number of times the account owner favorites other tweets, number of accounts followed, number of accounts followed by, age of the account holder.
Message Characteristics: has hashtag, has link, mentions another user (@), has exclamation mark, has emoticon, type of sentiment (calm, excited, strong , weak, etc.), polarity of sentiment (positive or negative). Tweet sentiment can be coded according to ANEW Dictionary.[25]

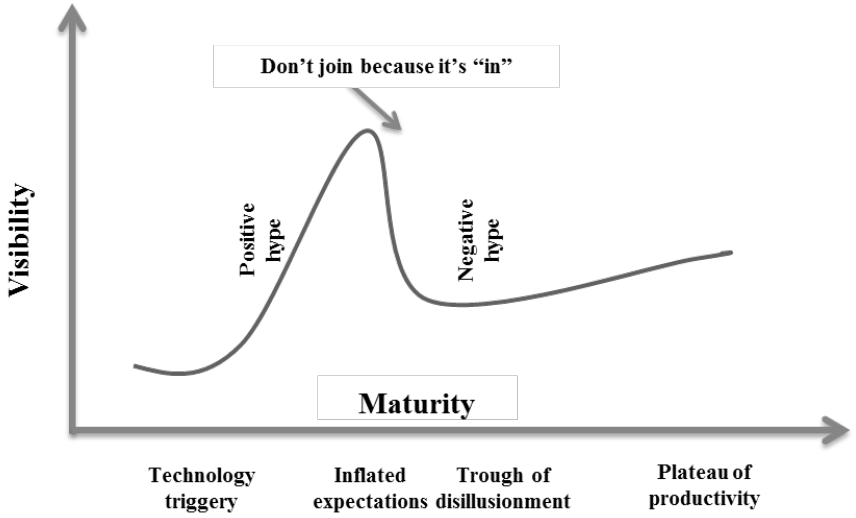
Author's Note: There are even companies that measure people's online influence such as Klout. The following excerpt from Klout's own website[26] explains its algorithm:

The majority of the signals used to calculate the Klout Score are derived from combinations of attributes, such as the ratio of reactions you generate compared to the amount of content you share. For example, generating 100 retweets from 10 tweets will contribute more to your Score than generating 100 retweets from 1,000 tweets. We also consider factors such as how selective the people who interact with your content are. The more a person likes and retweets in a given day, the less each of those individual interactions contributes to another person's Score. Additionally, we value the engagement you drive from unique individuals. One-hundred retweets from 100 different people contribute more to your Score than do 100 retweets from a single person.

Adoption of New Technologies & Gartner's Hype

Gartner's Hype proposes that there's always overenthusiasm about new technologies, which inflates potential demand. After quick popularity, however, there is a sharp Decline in the visibility of new innovations.[27] According to Gartner's hypothesis, the popularity of new innovations will be determined by time, but at the beginning there's always artificially created hype.[27] This may explain initial negative attitudes toward Facebook in Japan. In early 2011, we easily found eighteen students who had registered on but stopped using Facebook after announcing our study to only about one hundred people. The participants stated that they would not use Facebook because Mixi was simply better.[28] However, just two years after the study, the percentage of students who prefer Mixi over Facebook is zero at our university.[29] We think most of the early adopters had mixed feelings about Facebook simply because they did not have many friends on the platform or they did not know what to do with the service.

Figure 8.4 Gartner's Hype. Source:Fenn et al. (2009)



Gartner's Hype and the confusion experienced by early Facebook adopters in Japan can also be tied to adoption barriers that inherently exist for all new innovations. Consumer behavior researchers[30] identified and explained these barriers as follow:

Table 8.3 Barriers for New Innovations. Source:

Risk Barrier: New products bring many social and psychological risks (e.g., one may give up on buying a large-screen smartphone because friends may find it strange, etc.)
Usage Barrier: Most of the time new products are not part of people's daily routine, so people would not know how to utilize them.

Value Barrier: Since the product is new, it is difficult for consumers to do a cost/benefit analysis and understand its real value.
Tradition Barrier: Some new innovations may go against local traditions (e.g., in Islamic countries life insurance may be considered unnecessary)
Image Barrier: Some new innovations may be introduced by brands that are unfamiliar or have a negative image.

Social Media & Word of Mouth

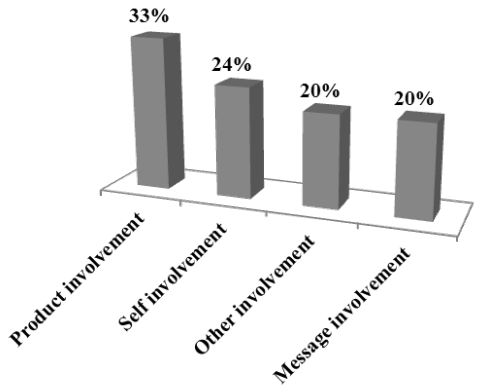
Although DOI and social movement theories give us wonderful insights on how ideas spread, they may not explain everything about the diffusion of commercial goods. Word of mouth (WOM), defined as "all informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers,"[31] accounts for eighty percent of all purchase Decisions, according to a study that analyzed six thousand business cases.[30] Another study that tracked people who signed up for an online network found that the impact of WOM was twenty times higher than traditional marketing activities, thirty times higher than media appearances, and lasted longer than the effects of promotional activities.[32] A clear example of word of mouth is Tamagotchi.[30] The brand first test-marketed the toy among high-school girls, and the girls who received the samples started telling their friends about the toy. Because of word of mouth, the product was sold out as soon as it was released on the market. Seth Godin, author of *Purple Cow*,[33] suggests that WOM is the only way to drive sales because there simply is too much advertising clutter and consumers trust their friends but not necessarily marketers and advertisers.

Overall, WOM is very helpful for consumers because it reduces risk and Decision-making time.[34] There's more demand for WOM for new products, expensive products, infrequently bought products, products that are visible and self-expressive (e.g. cars), and risky products (e.g. medical, legal, and investment services).[30] There are several reasons people choose to talk about products and services to their network members, as explained in the following table. Although people may think we share info to help others, past studies clearly show that concern for self-image and product involvement are more important than concern for others.[35,36]

Table 8.4 Why Do People Talk about Brands?

Product Involvement: If someone is very interested in a product category (for instance, electronics), he or she might enjoy talking about that product category or a brand from that category. *Self-Involvement*: Talking about a product makes someone seem expert, knowledgeable, and superior. *Other Involvement*: Positive WOM is mostly to help others improve their lives while negative WOM is for concern for others. *Message Involvement*: This happens when advertisements or product messages create discussion among consumers. (Source: Dichter, 1966)
Altruism: People help others without expecting any return and in general providing information about a useful product is considered to be a helpful act. *Feeling Better*: People may feel better and reduce their anxiety and anger by talking about products and services. (Source: Sundaram et al., 1998)

Figure 8.5 Reasons of WOM. Source: Dichter (1966)



Just like offline WOM, online WOM also impacts purchase Decisions. Recently, a study that analyzed book reviews posted on the Internet found that there's a very clear relationship between customer reviews on a site and sales of a book.[37] However, the effect of negative (one-star) review is higher than a positive (five-star) review. Similarly, online movie reviews can successfully predict box-office revenues, especially during the opening week.[38] In the same way, travel videos, pictures, opinions, and reviews shared in social media before and after vacations are found to have a big impact on consumers' travel choices.[39] Some scholars think online WOM is more effective than offline WOM because online WOM disseminates so rapidly and it is not limited to one's direct contacts (about 150 people).[40] With the help of social media, online WOM can spread far beyond the initial 150 people. However, recent studies showed that ninety percent of WOM still occurs offline (not online) and most product-related conversations take place in the home, among family members and friends, etc.[41] Additionally, people usually talk about food, technology, and entertainment[42] (not every single product category), and their conversations are mostly driven by TV commercials, not social media (yet).

Social Media & Content Sharing

The reasons for sharing things online are quite similar to why people engage in a WOM activity; however, we must understand that sharing a newspaper article, personal message, and branded message are not exactly the same things, thus motivations are likely to differ slightly for each type of content. A study[43] that assessed seven thousand articles published on the *New York Times* found that arousal is key. The study coded each article based on several categories (emotionality, positivity, awe, anger, anxiety, sadness, practical utility, interest, surprise, word count, and author fame) and then looked at how many times each article was shared online. The results suggested that regardless of interestingness and usefulness, articles that increase arousal are shared more, and articles that are not arousing are shared less. The following figure explains the findings of the study.

Figure 8.6 Emotions and Sharing Articles Online

Another project[44] commissioned by the *New York Times* that analyzed the sharing motivation for any content found that the top reason for passing online content onto others was "personal interest in social issues and social causes." The same study also identified several other motives, including "to bring valuable and entertaining contents to others," "to define ourselves to others," "to grow and nourish our relationships with others," and "for Self-fulfillment." By the same token, when researchers[45] measured personal traits of people and asked them how much time they spend forwarding electronic content in a typical week, they found that individualistic and altruistic people are more likely to share online content. Interestingly, one's need to belong to a group and need for personal growth did not predict sharing behavior. All these findings indicate that online sharing is about self but not others; therefore, we can presume that selfish people are likely to share more and people from collectivistic countries are likely to share less on the Internet.

As much as characteristics of the users, message content also heavily impacts what gets shared in social media. Kaplan and Haenlein[40] mention that most common types of posts include memorable and interesting messages, true stories about real people, rumors, practical lists (Top 10 Ways to_____, Top 5 Most Useful _____, etc.), hilarious messages, sex-related messages, posts that trigger emotional responses, posts that have surprises or create happiness or fear, and posts that are not already known by the user's friends (if the user thinks her network is aware of the information she won't post it). Regarding commercial messages, the authors emphasize the importance of market mavens (those who receive and share a lot of information about products that interest them), salespeople, and social hubs (influentials). For branded messages to be shared, salespeople should monitor messages related to their brands that are posted by market mavens and then find a way to pass them on to social hubs. Nevertheless, this formula may not work all the time because according to Kaplan and Heinlein, social media is "more art than science" and does not have ultimate rules. They give two examples where a social media campaign that worked perfectly for one brand was a disaster for another. P&G had a very successful campaign that asked people to create funny YouTube videos about the problems Pepto-Bismol cures (diarrhea, upset stomach, etc.). A few years later, Heinz Ketchup ran a similar campaign that involved making a funny video about the situations in which people use their ketchup. However, the participation was minimal and a backlash arose against the campaign, charging that the company was trying to take advantage of its users. Similarly, Starbucks asked people to take pictures while having a cup of coffee in

front of the store sign and upload them onto Twitter to get rewards. While some customers participated in the campaign, many uploaded pictures to support a documentary that highlighted bad labor practices at the company.

When it comes to sharing a YouTube video, "surprises and incongruity" are the key components that can explain the differences between commonly shared videos and the rest. Three out of four recent studies indicated that in order to go viral a video must have a surprise. The other crucial elements are "emotional appeal," "humorousness," and community engagement, as explained in the table below. Additionally, it was found that usually extroverted and egocentric people forward videos more (egotists forward videos to show their own taste, their connectedness, and their media savvy). Lastly, as one may expect, videos shared among members of heterogeneous groups (with various interests) are more likely to go viral than those shared in homogenous groups (e.g., niche interests).

Table 8.5 Why Does a YouTube Video Go Viral?

1) Tastemakers/influencers share it. A good example is the "double rainbow video," which performed very poorly for several months but suddenly went viral because a celebrity tweeted about it. **2)** Communities get involved and each community or a member of a community makes a new parody or a new version of the video. **3)** The video has an unexpected ending. (Source: Allocca, 2012)
Because it has... **1)** Laugh-out-loud funny content **2)** Cutting-edge, unique content **3)** Thrilling content **4)** Sexy or erotic content (Source: Southgate et al., 2010)
Because it features... **1)** Ordinary people (User-generated videos are more likely to go viral) **2)** Flawed masculinity (Males that don't meet social expectations; weaknesses or stupidity of males shown) **3)** Humor and incongruity **4)** Simplicity (No editing or less editing, one simple message or one simple action, focused on one person or one object) **5)** Repetitiveness (some parts of the video are repeated, making it easier for others to remake the same video) **6)** Whimsical content (things related with popular culture, no controversial topics) (Source: Shifman: 2012)
Because it has... **1)** A surprise bundled with another emotion (most of the time joy) **2)** An emotional roller-coaster: emotional ups and downs and different emotions in the same video (Source: Rockett, 2012)

The Case of the Harlem Shake Video

On February 2, 2013, a YouTube user using the pseudonym Filthy Frank uploaded a video that showed him dancing with three other young males (who looked like college students) to the song "Harlem Shake." On the same day two other YouTube users uploaded a similar video that showed them dancing to the same song as a group. One of the second videos garnered as many as 300,000 views in just three days. Meanwhile, other users started creating parodies of the video that showed a group of people, one of whom wore a helmet or mask, dancing to the same song. Both the original video and the two follow-ups generated more than five million views each in less than two weeks, and it became such a huge phenomenon that at one point all major universities, major brands, and even the (Norwegian) army were making their own versions of the video.

Even though the video is sexist (the gestures of the lead character are considered obscene in some cultures) and not easy to create (the video must be edited in order to match the original version) it went viral. Why did this happen, why did people create parodies of this video but not many other interesting ones? It is difficult to answer, as it may be just a herding behavior that randomly became popular among some niche YouTube communities and once perceived as a trend grew exponentially. We may speculate, however, that some of the following factors may have helped its popularity:

- The early versions of the video have a lot of naked college kids. Remember, we subconsciously pay more attention to naked people.
- Just like some other popular videos, the video is about a group of people dancing to the music in an original way.
- It is about surprising the viewers by using creativity. It builds up expectation during the fist half. Even though the first half is boring, people still watch it because it is not long and it makes the second half more enjoyable (e.g., from super slow to super-fast).
- It requires teamwork and fosters group spirit. Getting more views on YouTube is an endorsement and social proof of group success and group creativity.
- It is an opportunity for "creative types" to establish their image in their group.
- For a workplace it is a good way to do something crazy that can bring employees together and show an American way of thinking: life shouldn't be taken that seriously and our workplace is a fun place to be. This is a form of escaping from the stress of daily problems by doing simple, stupid, or crazy things.
- It's like Halloween. You can do crazy and stupid things but it is OK because everyone else is doing it, or you can cover it by wearing a mask or costume. At the same time, you can somewhat show your real identity.

Regardless, we can never fully understand why things go viral. These are just potential explanations, but it is not guaranteed that another video that has these features can go viral.

CHAPTER VIII

Facebook

Facebook is the biggest online social networking site, with over one billion registered accounts.[1] "Founded in 2004, Facebook's mission is to make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them."[1] People have different motivations to use this platform including relationship-building, efficient and convenient communication, desire for popularity, relationship maintenance,[2] content and status updating, social investigation,[3] impression management, escapism, information-seeking, and surveillance.[4] It is reported that the most common reason for using Facebook is keeping in touch with preexisting contacts (friends), followed by building social capital and social grooming (strengthening social bonds and establishing group stability).[5] Today Facebook is a global phenomenon. According to the world's largest-ever human-subjects study, which analyzed the online behavior of 721 million Facebook users, any two random Facebook users (e.g., a farmer in Bolivia and a stockbroker in London) are only four connections away from each other.[6]

Consequences of Facebook Use

Since Facebook allows us to build, maintain, and even terminate relationships, its effects may run deep. Studies showed that actively using Facebook (interacting with others) increases life satisfaction, emotional support, and social capital, while passive usage Decreases life satisfaction.[5] Users who post on others' profiles and send messages out on Facebook report feeling less lonely,[7] but at the same Facebook users who keep in touch with their ex-partners report more stress versus those who have limited contact.[8] In a study in which people were asked about the emotions they experienced last time they used Facebook, 40% stated positive emotions (joyful, satisfied, etc.), while 37% stated negative emotions (bored, angry, etc.).[9] Respondents thought some people get frustrated when using Facebook because of envy (seeing others' holiday photos, etc.).

In line with the findings described above, a Pew report[10] suggested that people who receive more friend requests and people who post more status updates on Facebook tend to report a slightly higher level of social and emotional support. Since it is difficult to know whether Facebook increases social support or people with more social support post more frequently on Facebook, an experiment[11] with a control group was conducted that asked participants to post more than they usually do for one week. Seven days later, the participants in the experimental group indicated lower levels of loneliness compared to those who were in the control group, regardless of responses they received to their posts. Social support received from network members on Facebook can even help people get a new job. For three months, researchers[12] tracked the Facebook activities of people who had lost a job and found that, contrary to Granovetter's theory, people who communicated with strong ties on Facebook were five times more like to find a new job.

Facebook profiles significantly increase one's self-awareness (like a mirror) and exposure to one's own Facebook profile right after a threat is likely to reduce a person's self-defenses.[13] That is why people are likely to spend more time on Facebook when their egos are threatened. However, too much exposure to one's own profile makes a person a narcissist. Research showed[14] that people who tag themselves in others' photos and frequently update their statuses might have a narcissistic personality disorder, and narcissistic people usually spend more time on Facebook. Another study that asked participants to edit their social network profiles on Myspace and Facebook found that after the editing activity participants scored higher on narcissism and self-esteem scales.[15] Beyond narcissism, frequent Facebook updates may also be related with desire to be seen attractive, as research showed that people who have photos with many comments tend to be perceived more attractive and users whose walls have comments from attractive users were perceived as more attractive.[16]

Some reliable indicators of what people do on Facebook are demographic variables and total friend counts. Females usually spend more time on Facebook, have larger social circles,[17] care more about privacy,[18] upload more photos, and change their profile pictures more often.[19] Also, people who live in rural areas have fewer friends, use privacy measures more carefully, and are likely to be skewed toward female users.[20] Interestingly, people with more profile pictures tend to have more friends and people who have more friends tend to write longer updates, talk more about music and sports and less about their families, use the past and present tense less often, and use the word *you* more often.[21] What people talk about on Facebook can also be tied to time of the day, as early in the morning (from six to seven a.m.) people post positive thoughts and feelings that change into negative feelings toward the end of the day. Overall, positive updates get more likes and negative ones get more comments, as negative updates usually tend to be about a problem and people try to help by commenting on the problem. Sleeping, negative emotions, body states, and job- or work-related updates are liked less and positive emotions, posts related to other people, and social processes are liked more.[21]

Despite its positive effects, Facebook usage has some negative outcomes, including addiction and risky information-sharing. Facebook can be addictive perhaps because the users are under the illusion that their social interactions are the same as interacting with someone in real life.[22] In the age of social media, teenagers check their e-communication tools (Facebook) every 15 minutes,[23] 27% of people under age thirty-five check Facebook more than ten times a day, and 36% of Americans under thirty-five report checking Facebook and Twitter even right after sex.[24] Several external factors such as anxiety, depression, and preexisting socializing problems seem to influence this irregular behavior, and women, more than men, are more likely to develop Facebook addiction.[25] What is worse, it is reported that heavy Facebook users tend to be fatter, have a higher credit-card debt, and a lower credit score.[26]

Another problem involved with Facebook use is risky information disclosure, as in general people disclose more info to their friends on Facebook than they do in real life.[27] The first academic study about Facebook (2005) related to privacy, and it found that half of the users provided their home address and about forty percent their phone number on their profiles, making account holders vulnerable to information breach.[28] It was found that those who want to be popular disclose more information, whereas people with high self-esteem control what they share.[29] Sharing personal information may also spark cyberbullying, as today 90% of American teenagers indicate that they witnessed someone bullying another person in social media, with 8% being the victims.[30] Furthermore, teenagers use Facebook heavily. It was found that the number of Facebook friends of younger users (ages fifteen to thirty) is eleven times higher than that of older users,[31] and usually those who use Facebook/social media heavily have lower grades and a lower attention span.[23] Nevertheless 38% of parents allow their kids under fifteen to have a Facebook account and about half of parents' friend their kids on Facebook in order to check what they are up to.[32] Facebook privacy controls, introduced to reduce risky information sharing, may help, but only 15%–20% of members report having used them.[33]

Facebook and Predictability

Studies found that strangers can accurately assess one's personality based on a Facebook profile (so the presumption that people present themselves cooler than they really are on Facebook is not necessarily true). Furthermore, one's Facebook profile can accurately predict academic performance and job performance in addition to whether the person can get a job.[34] Additionally, evaluation of one's personality based on a Facebook page yields pretty much the same result as that person's own evaluation.[35] Facebook profile photos can also predict future life satisfaction. Researchers looked at the profile pictures of college students during their freshman year and then assessed their life satisfaction in their senior year. They found that students who smiled during the first year in their profile pictures were more satisfied with their lives three-and-a-half years later.[36]

Facebook activities by and large reflect one's traits, social network size, and life stage. A study[37] that tracked 58,000 American Facebook users found that their personalities, IQ, political affiliation, and sexual orientation can be predicted by what people like publicly on Facebook. One's social network size can also be predicted by the content of his or her updates, as people who share emotions in their status updates have larger social networks.[38] Interestingly, it is also possible to predict whether people are single or married by assessing the

words used in status updates. A large-scale study found that married or engaged people use more positive words in their status updates and people who are not in a relationship post more negative words.[39]

Facebook & the Human Brain

People who have more Facebook friends are found to have high-density grey matter in the amygdala region of their brains.[40] Also, the regions of the brain related to associative memory and social perception also had higher-density grey matter, which correlated with the number of friends in online social networks. A similar study that measured the amygdala size and number of Facebook friends[41] also found pretty much the same findings where people with larger amygdalae had larger social networks. A different study in the United Kingdom[42] first asked the participants to read a story about social interactions between several characters and then measured their grey area in the brain and if they could correctly answer questions about what the characters thought about each other. The results showed that people with larger social networks answered the questions about the story correctly and also had a high level of grey area in their brain. Another study that measured the skin conductance and pupil dilution[43] of the subjects who used Facebook and also solved a math problem and looked at landscape pictures found that users had much higher arousal when they saw the page of Facebook. On the other hand, a brain-scan study found that users did not perceive Facebook as personal, something that personally relates to them. When Facebook users' brain activity was measured[44] while looking at the screenshots of Facebook and other media types (TV, books, websites, etc.), it was found that brain areas that are related more with self-perception were more activated while watching TV or reading books.

Figure 9.1 Activities of American Facebook Users (*In the past 30 days*). Source: Pew Research Center (2012)

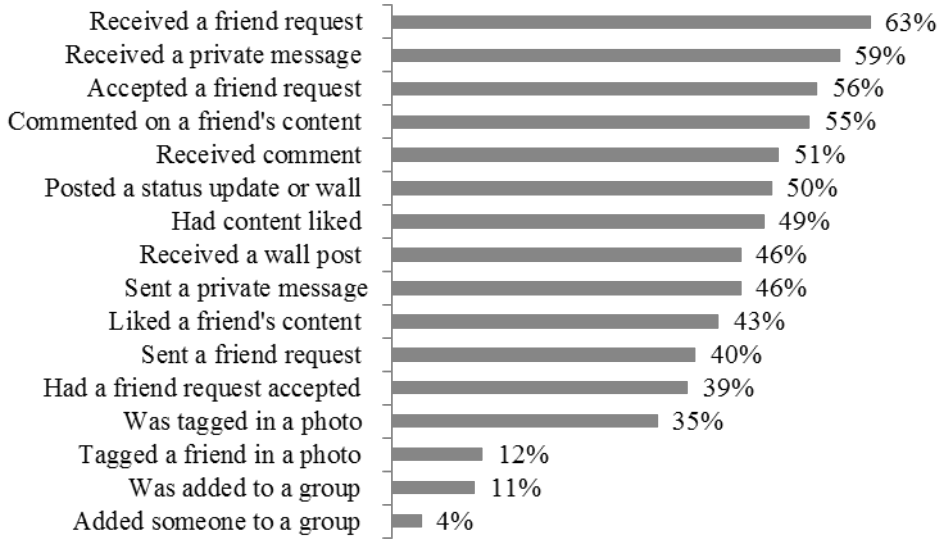
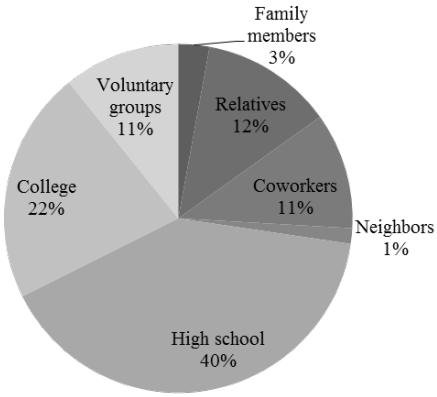


Figure 9.2 Who Do People Friend With? Source: Pew Research Center (2012)

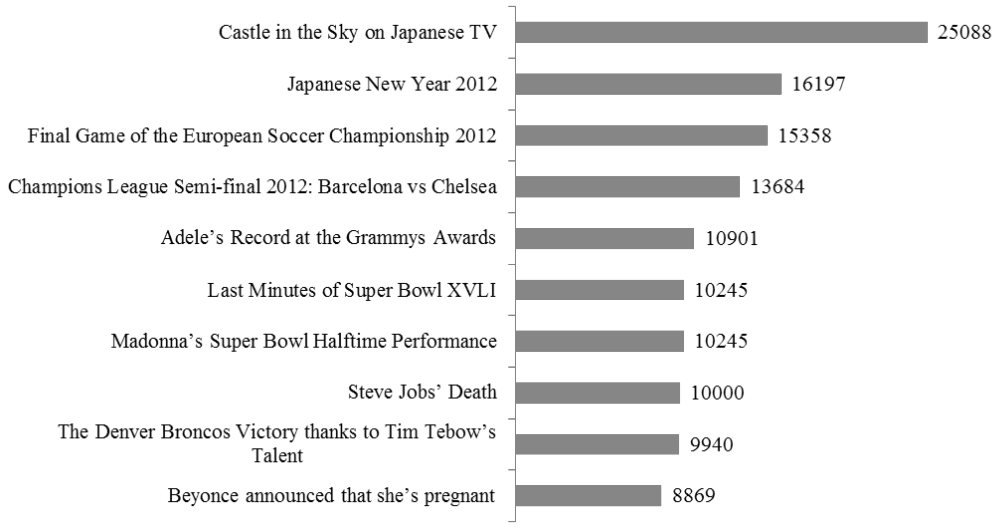

Family members 3%
Relatives 12%
Coworkers 11%
Neighbors 1%
High school 40%
College 22%
Voluntary groups 11%

CHAPTER IX

Twitter

Twitter is “a real-time information network that connects you (users) to the latest information about what you (they) find interesting.”[1] Twitter has many features similar to other online social networking sites, such as directed social connections between users and status updates; however, unlike other social network services, it does not require mutual acquaintance between members for any information to be shared. Unless the account is protected, once a user posts a message on his/her Twitter timeline, that message (tweet) becomes public and can be viewed by anyone. Because of this anonymity and the lack of mutual acquaintance, some scholars claimed that Twitter is not a social network but just an information network.

Figure 10.1 The Most Tweeted Moments of 2012 (tweets per second). Source: Seevibes.com



An extensive Twitter study showed that only 22% of the users follow each other, meaning Twitter users in general follow and are followed by different people.[3] Users who are *me-formers* (who frequently send tweets that include "I" "me" "my" etc.) are less likely to be followed, whereas users who are *informers* (those who have a high reciprocity rate and use words like *via*, *by*, *RT*, etc.) are more likely to be followed. Along the same lines, people who have Twitter bursts (sending out several tweets within an hour) are less likely to be followed. Additionally, Twitter profiles that are longer and include a location and a URL address are more likely to be followed.[4] When it comes to the content, it was found that 90% tweets posted by 10% of users [5] and 85% of trending topics are just headline news.[3] In terms of retweetability (possibility that a tweet will be forwarded) the following message categories have a higher chance a) tweets that have verbs and adverbs b) tweets that are posted later in the day and posted on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, c) tweets that have the words *you*, *retweet*, and *please* and d) news and instructional posts.[6] Tweets sent on weekends are more likely to be read or clicked on because a) commercial entities send fewer messages on weekends, so the visibility of messages sent by real people increases, and b) on weekends people have more leisure time so they can browse the internet.

Table 10.1 What Do People Tweet About?

Dann, S. (2010). "Twitter content classification". In *First Monday, February 2010, 15* (2). [online]: First Monday. Retrieved Dec. 26, 2013, from December 06, 2010 fromhttp://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2745/2681	*1- Conversational 2- Pass along 3- News 4-Status 5-Phatic 6-Spam*
Naaman, M., Boase, J. & Lai, C.-H. (2010). Is it Really About Me? Message Content inSocial Awareness Streams. In Proceedings Computer Supported CooperativeWork 2010, Savanah: ACM	***1-Information sharing 2- Self-promotion 3-opinions/Complaints 4- Statements/Random thoughts 5- Me now 6-Question to Followers 7-Presence maintenance 8- Anecdote (me) 9- Anecdote (others)***
Java, X. Song, T. Finin, and B. Tseng, 2007. "Why we Twitter: Understanding microblogging usage and communities," *Proceedings of the Ninth WEBKDD and First SNA–KDD Workshop on Web Mining and Social Network Analysis*, pp. 56–65.	***1-Daily chatter 2- Conversations 3- Sharing information, URLs 4- Reporting news***
Jansen, M. Zhang, K. Sobel, and A. Chowdury, 2009. "Twitter power: Tweets as electronic word of mouth," Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, volume 60, number 11, pp. 2,169–2,188	***1- Comments 2- Sentiments 3- Information Seeking 4- Information Providing Subcategories 1-Positive/negative comments 2-Response 3-Question 4-Answer 5-Chitchat 6-Suggestion 7-Comment 8-Expecting 9-Patronizing 10-Announcement 11-Request 12-Forwarding …***
Honeycutt and S. Herring, 2009. "Beyond microblogging: Conversation and collaboration via Twitter," Proceedings of the Forty–Second Hawai'i International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS–42), pp. 1–10	***1-About addressee (solicit or comment on information) 2- Announce/advertise 3- Exhort (direct/encourage others to do something) 4-Information for others 5- Information for self 6- Met commentary (about twitter) 7-Media use 8- Opinion (subjective or evaluative position) 9- Other's experience 10- Self experience 11- Solicit information 12- others (greetings, nonsense)***
Pear Analytics, 2009. "Twitter study" (August), at http://www.pearanalytics.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Twitter-Study-August-2009.pdf	***1-News 2- spam 3- Self-promotion 4- Pointless babble 5- conversational 6-Pass-along value***
K. Ehrlich and S. Shami. Microblogging inside andoutside the workplace. In ICWSM '10: Proc. of the Int.Conf. on Weblogs and Social Media. AAAI	***1-Status (what are you doing now) 2- Information (links, news, comments, opinions etc) 3- Retweet 4-Questions 5- Directed posts 6- Directed Questions***

Personality and Twitter Use

Personality analyses of Twitter users showed that extroverts post more about family; conscientious (organized) people post more about work, use fewer negatives (*no*, *not*) and use more links per tweet; those prone to stress post more about religion; and people who are open use more articles (*a*, *an*, *the*). Popular users (ones with many followers) and influential users (ones with many followers and whose messages garner responses) tend to be emotionally stable and extroverted.[9] Influentials tend to be conscientious and popular users tend to be imaginative. Just like the pattern on Facebook, an analysis of emotions in tweets showed that people post more negative emotion–related words (e.g., *annoyed*, *scared*, etc.) later in the day and more positive emotion–related words (e.g. *happy*, *excited*, etc.) on weekends.[10] Compared to Facebook users, on the other hand, Twitter users tend to be less sociable but have a higher need for cognition (curiosity about things, life, interest in mentally challenging tasks, etc.).[11]

Twitter Use During Disasters

When disasters hit, Twitter becomes an enormously important tool to share and receive information because traditional communication channels (TV, radio, newspapers, and telephones) may not function well as a result of disruption in power lines or supply distribution channels.[12] Additionally, people utilize social media channels during and after disasters to get unfiltered and timely information, determine the magnitude of the

disaster, check in with family and friends, self-mobilize, seek emotional support, and maintain the sense of community.[13] Twitter was successfully utilized by the public during the earthquakes in Chile and China, grass fires in Oklahoma and bushfires in Australia.[12] In our study on the Tōhoku disaster, we found that many people benefited from social media and one of the victims who was trapped on the roof of a building got help through Twitter.[14] However, when a disaster strikes, most people send out tweets to indicate they are safe rather than they are in danger, because the number of people who are safe tends to be higher. Additionally, some people try to spread false news and rumors[12] (this exact motivation of this behavior is not known). After the Tōhoku earthquake, many Twitter users affected by the disaster complained about the rumors and suggested either introducing official hashtags or limiting the number of RTs for each hashtag to prevent these problems.[12]

Table 10.2 Examples of Twitter /Other Social Media Usage During Disasters. Source: Faustina et al. (2012)

Hurricane Katrina (2005): About half of the victims used Internet to contact network members that they haven't interacted with for more than a year. 13 million Americans used Internet to make donations.
Haitian Earthquake (2010): 2.3 million Tweets included the word "Haiti" and raised awareness of the disaster. The *Wall Street Journal* created a slideshow featuring photographs taken by disaster victims and shared online.
Tuscaloosa & Joplin Tornadoes (2011): People received the first images of the disaster on Twitter. A Facebook group was created to coordinate rescue efforts and locate family members and was joined by more than 120,000 people in a few days. Another social media site was created to collect ideas about how to improve life in the aftermath. More than 300 ideas shared on the site. People found out about volunteer opportunities in social media.
Hurricane Sandy (2012): 1.1 million tweets mentioned Hurricane Sandy during the first 21 hours. Photo-sharing site Instagram received 10 storm-related pictures per second. The use of Skype increased by 122% right after the disaster. The photo showing dark clouds over the Statue of Liberty circulated widely but turned out to be a Photoshop trick.

Twitter & Civic Journalism

Civic journalism is the term for average people's contribution to the dissemination of news, and goes back to the Seattle riots of 1999. During those riots, protesters thought the mainstream media portrayed them negatively and founded their own websites to provide objective news.[15] Civic journalism may be very helpful for society because anyone can participate in it and it is quick and more effective in places where there is government censorship or regulation (e.g., courtrooms). On the other hand, using social media, especially Twitter, has some serious downsides, including limited text space, amateur journalism, and low credibility, which spurs hoaxes and rumors.[16] Despite the fact that 50% of people found out about breaking news via social media, 49% of social media users state that they heard of at least one news story that turned out to be false.[16]

Overall, a quarter of journalists agree that crowdsourcing improves journalism, while 40% believe social media is a threat to the objectivity of journalism.[17] Even CNN, the operator of the world's largest citizen-journalism platform, with more than one million members (iReporters) worldwide, denigrates its contributors according to a study about Iranian elections.[18] Nevertheless, with the help of citizen journalists many real news stories broke on Twitter, including Osama Bin Laden's death, the Hudson River plane crash, the royal wedding announcement, and Hillary Clinton's Decision to not join Obama's cabinet.[19] Regarding false news, the biggest problem seems to be the lack of interest in forwarding corrections. For instance, during the Occupy Wall Street events, a false news story posted by NBC was retweeted many times. Shortly afterward, both NYPD and NBC corrected the news, but the corrections were retweeted by only a small fraction of those who tweeted the wrong news.[20]

CHAPTER X

Business Uses of Social Media

Motivations

Social media can be used for many different commercial purposes, including advertising, promotions, educating consumers, educating personnel, customer service, market research, new product development, public relations, human resources management, investor relations, and so on. The list can be much longer than this, as anything that has been done on the Internet can now be done through social media. Currently nineteen out of the top twenty social media–related books on Amazon are related to business uses of social media, and global social media advertising expenditure reportedly hit $4.7 billion in 2012.[1] The question is, why do companies pay this much attention to social media? Perhaps the answer is its superiority over traditional media channels, as explained in the following two tables:

Table 10.1 Advantages of Social Media

Customer Retention**:** An advertising message may reach one person one time only and companies must pay money to have another advertising campaign. However if a consumer becomes a fan in social media, companies can send a message to that person over and over again.
Immediate Effects**:** The effects of social media can be seen right away, whereas in traditional media it may take months to see any effect.
Cheaper**:** There are fixed costs of creating a TV program or a radio program but maintaining a YouTube channel or a Facebook page does not (presumably) cost much.
Faster**:** Producing content –e.g., updating statuses– is faster in social media, whereas typical public relations activities may take time.
Easier to Monitor**:** The behavior of recipients in social media can be easily monitored (e.g. likes, shares, views, comments, etc.)
Personal**:** Social media messages can easily be personalized or customized based on audience characteristics. For instance Whole Foods reportedly has more than 250 Facebook pages for its customers with different preferences.

Table10.2 Comparison of Social Media with Traditional Media Channels. Source: First three columns are based on Steward et al., 2002[2]

	TV	**Magazines**	**Newspapers**	**Social Media**
Total Population Reach	very strong	fair	good	fair
Percentage of Upscale Users	fair	very strong	good	fair
Percentage of Young People	fair	good	poor	very strong
Localization Opportunities	poor	poor	fair	strong
Ability to Control the Effects	poor	good	good	strong
Attention-grabbing	very strong	good	fair	poor
Whether people worry about the “clutter”	normal	normal	normal	high for ads/low for friends' posts
Emotional Stimulation	very strong	very strong	fair	poor
Brand-Name registration	very strong	fair	fair	fair

Prestige of the Medium	very strong	strong	fair	poor
Interactivity	poor	poor	poor	very strong
Multiple Exposure Opportunities	fair	poor	poor	strong
Action (purchase)	delayed	delayed	delayed	delayed

Facebook & Business

At the time of writing, 95% of the top U.S. brands[3] and 58% of Fortune 500 companies[4] have been actively using Facebook for varying purposes. Motivations to use Facebook can range from customer service to public education and promotions to market research. It is reported that Toyota used Facebook to listen to its customers during the recall crisis in 2010 and managed to turn the crisis into an opportunity by increasing the number of its fans.[5] Similarly, BestBuy asked its fans on Facebook to rank vampire movies, which increased sales of that genre, and Chase Bank improved its brand image by allowing Facebook fans to Decide the charities the bank will donate to. Facebook is not only an ideal tool for brands to communicate with their fans, but also to attract new fans that may increase the sales. For instance, Dairy Queen gathered more than 100,000 new fans with the help of the $5 Tasty Treat giveaway campaign, which offered a $5 coupon to each fan that liked the brand's Facebook page.[5]

The value of a Facebook fan is estimated to be $136.38.[6] This number was calculated based on the fact that fans spend more, are more loyal to the brand and more likely to recommend a brand, have higher brand affinity, and carry a certain earned media value. The study also found that fans on average spend $71 more than non-fans.[6] A similar study[7] that surveyed 1,700 customers of a bakery shop (DG) in Texas after they became Facebook fans of the brand reported that:

> *Though they spent about the same amount of money per visit, they increased their store visits per month after becoming Facebook fans and generated more positive word of mouth than nonfans. They went to DG 20% more often than nonfans and gave the store the highest share of their overall dining-out dollars. They were the most likely to recommend DG to friends and had the highest average Net Promoter Score—75, compared with 53 for Facebook users who were not fans and 66 for customers not on Facebook. DG fans also reported significantly greater emotional attachment to DG—3.4 on a four-point scale, compared with 3.0 for other customers. Additionally, fans were the most likely to say they chose DG over other establishments whenever possible.*

People who follow brands on Facebook seemingly have different motivations. Two different studies identified slightly different reasons to follow a brand. Mashable reports[8] that the top reasons to follow a brand are 1) to receive discounts and promotions, 2) to give social endorsement (show one's support for a company to others), and 3) to get a freebie. According to a report[9] released by the market research company Lab 42, the top reasons people follow a brand are 1) prompted by an ad (online or offline) or invitation from the brand, 2) invited by a friend, and 3) personal research. Meanwhile, 69% of Facebook users have an experience of Liking a brand after seeing their friends' Likes on the brand, and 46% report that they have no intention of buying anything from a brand(s) they Liked on Facebook, either because it is expensive or they Liked the brand just to get a freebie. The same study also indicates that 22% of the people feel uncomfortable giving Likes to brands from certain categories (adult novelty, weight loss, etc.). Despite the fact that only 16% of brands' posts actually appear in fans' timelines[10] (for instance, if Coca-Cola posts something on Facebook, 84% of Coke fans usually don't see that post unless they go to Coke's Facebook page), more than two-thirds of Facebook users reported that they are more selective when liking a company than they were a year ago, and 81% of them have Unliked a brand on Facebook because of a cluttered newsfeed or irrelevance to personal life.[11] The unfollowing rate on Twitter, however, is a much lower 41%.[11]

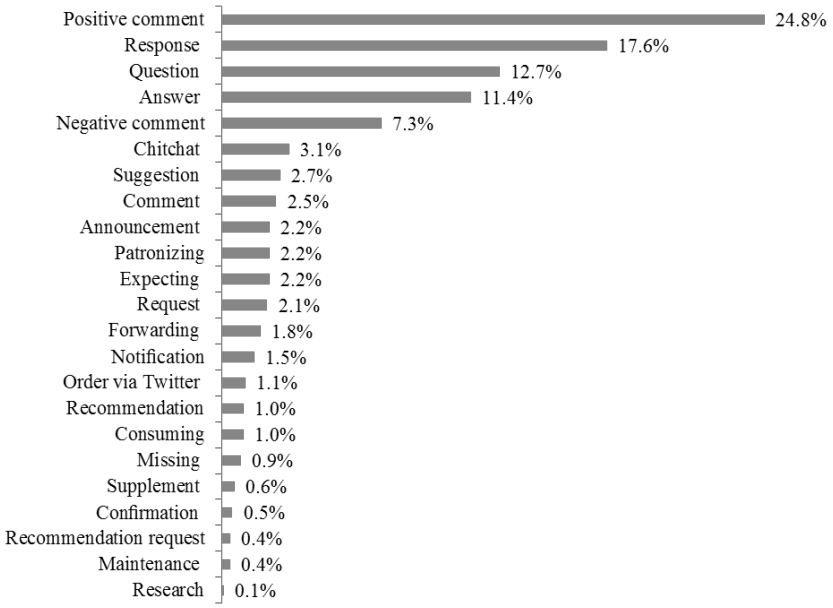
At the same time, the direct effects of Facebook on sales may be limited. Studies showed that social media drive only 2% of sales,[12] and only 2% of the people say they'd buy something on Facebook[13] (a.k.a. fCommerce). What is more, a study that analyzed the way people are influenced by communication in social media found that 12% of social media users were negatively influenced by their friends product-related posts (particularly for the fashion category, as some people may not want to wear what everyone else is wearing) and 48% were not influenced at all by their friends' posts.[14] Worse still, engagement on Facebook may be limited to super-active core fans only. A study[15] that analyzed fifty-two brand pages with a total of 31.7 million fans for eight weeks found that only 6% of fans engage with brands. The twenty most active fans of each brand generate most of the content on brands' walls and their activity is seventy-five times higher than that of a normal fan, though these active fans tend to get more likes and comments from other fans.

Business Uses of Twitter

Besides being used as an internal communication tool, Twitter can be utilized by brands in several ways, including announcement of sales promotions,[16] sharing company and product news,[17] researching consumer needs,[18] and actively engaging in dialogues with consumers.[19] Similar to Facebook, brands use Twitter for three major reasons: news, special offers, and dialogue with existing or potential customers.[20] By the same token, consumers follow a Twitter account for three reasons: they are already customers, they want to be the first to know about information about the brand, or they want to get discounts.[21] It is argued that today's consumers are more individualism-driven, demand more information from brands, and want to have customized products and services.[18] Twitter, which turned passive consumers into active content creators, comes in handy when answering all these needs.

By 2013, 95% of the top hundred American brands have been reported to have a Twitter account, and 86% tweet on a weekly basis.[3] A significant portion of the top brands use Twitter to engage with their customers, as the study found that within a week 67% of the brands used a hashtag (the # sign used to chat with customers), 74% sent a message directly addressing a customer, 52% retweeted (shared) another user's tweet, and about one third asked a question to its followers.[3] One important aspect of Twitter is its capacity to personify brands and make them reachable all the time,[5] which may pave the way for friendship between brands and consumers. In order to establish a personal relationship with consumers, brands all around the world personalize their Twitter accounts by using human faces, personalized accounts (e.g. @MikeatXOM instead of @XOM), use personal pronouns in tweets (e.g. *I*, *we*), and post tweets that include emoticons and abbreviations (e.g. ☺, OMG, LOL).[22]

Figure 10.1 What Do People Tell Brands on Twitter? Source: *A 2008 study[23] that analyzed 1585 tweets with the word"Starbucks" (page 228)*

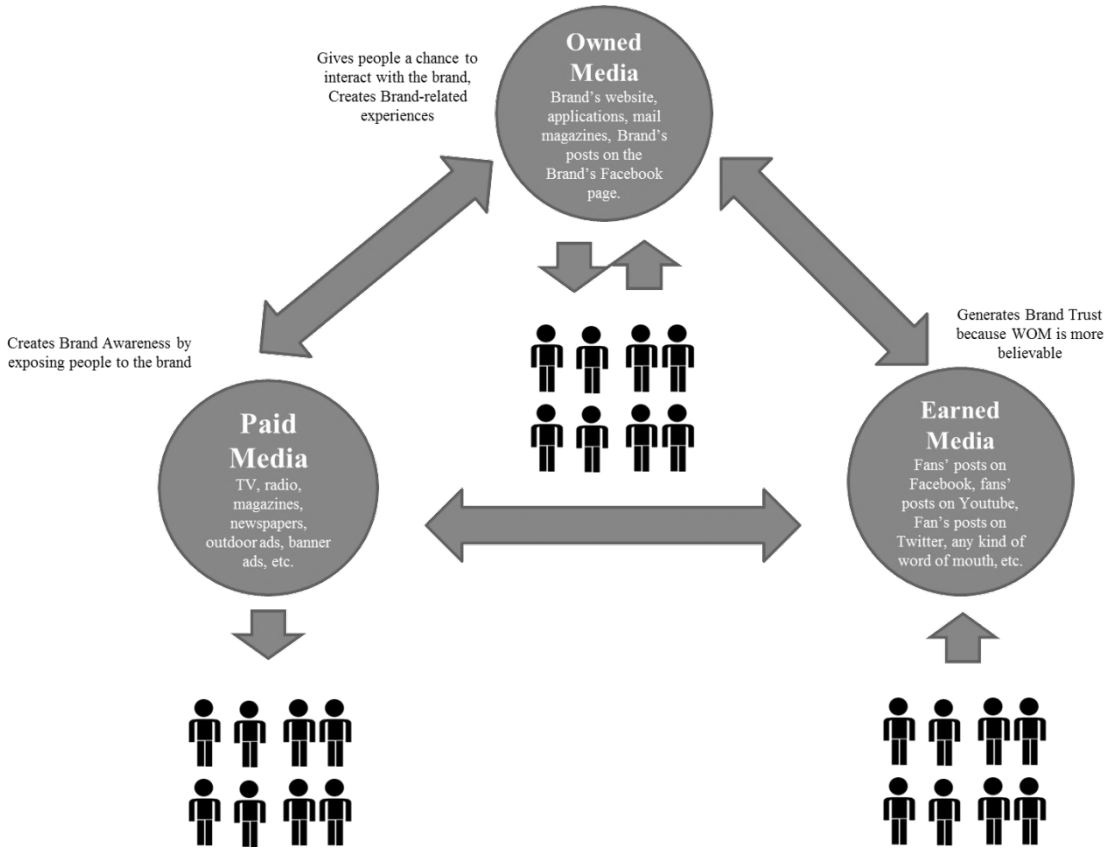


Many companies, including JetBlue, GM, and Home Depot, also search Twitter's public timeline to find messages that include their brand names and then respond to those posts with coupons and offers, which boosts customer loyalty, brand image, and sales.[20] There are reports[24] that Dell made $3 million in 2009 just by tweeting about refurbished computer campaigns. On the other hand, misuse of Twitter is very risky for companies. A blog post by the CEO of HootSuite gave examples[25] of how brands trying to take advantage of disasters faced a consumer backlash, and how employees and spokespeople sending out tweets on behalf of brands caused problems.

Social Media Models

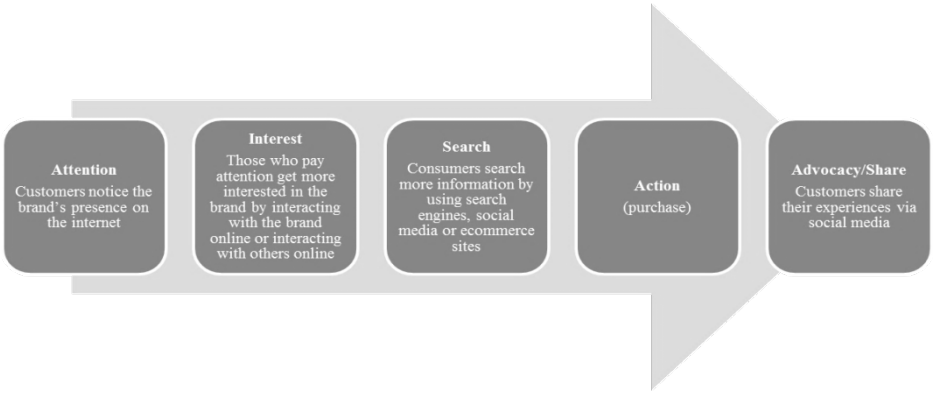
Unfortunately, no scientifically tested social media models exist. However, recently several social media bloggers coined new terms and introduced new models that hypothesize how social media works. The first is the *owned, earned, and paid media* model. As seen in the figure below, *paid media* represents paid advertising channels and *owned media* stands for a brand's social media space. Social media is considered owned media because brands have full control of what happens on their own social media pages. *Earned media* is considered the most effective; it stands for user-generated content that involves brands. In other words, when someone posts a picture of his Coke tattoo, that blog post is considered earned media, as it promotes Coke by someone who is not associated with the company. Earned media is the most effective way to promote a brand, as consumers trust other consumers more than they trust brands.

Figure 10.2 Paid, Owned and Earned Media. Source: The Social Media Textbook by Spreadfast (Page 40). The Image is the author's own interpretation.



The second model is introduced by Dentsu[26] and is quite similar to the century-old AIDA (attention-interest-desire-action) model. [27] Dentsu's model starts with *attention*, followed by *interest*, *search*, and *action*. The last step in the model is *share*; that is, instead of just consuming and disposing of products, consumers share their experiences in social media. This step did not exist before the age of social media, and it is a process that shifts the balance of power from brands to consumers. If consumers have a negative experience, they complain about the brand in social media. If they have a positive experience, they turn into brand advocates.

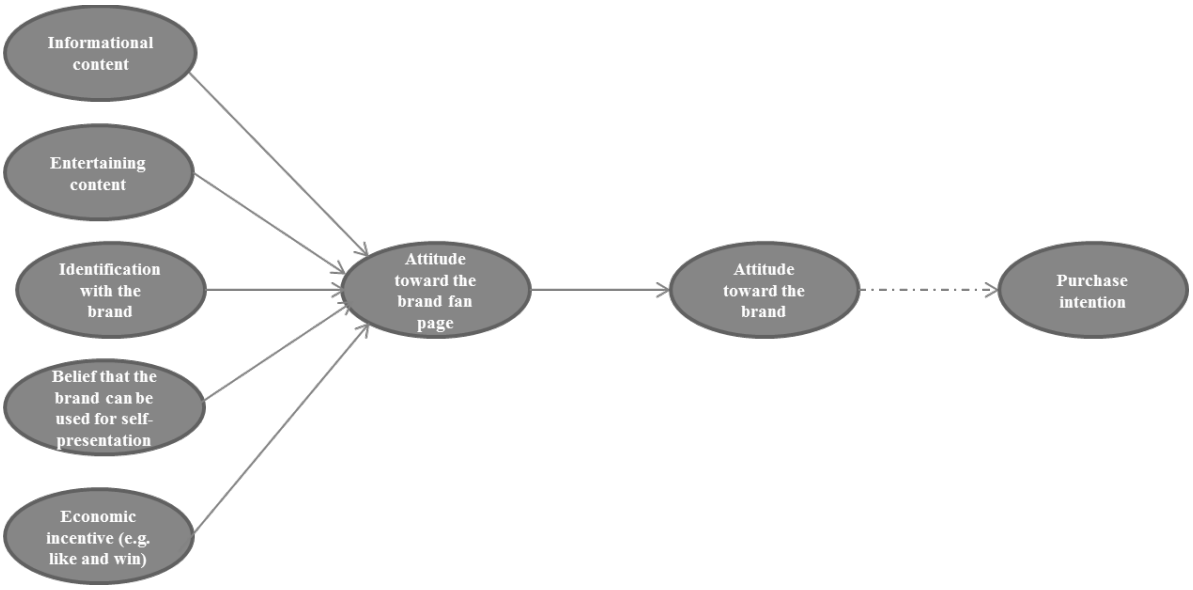
Figure 10.3 Dentsu's AISAS model



The third model was introduced by a research team from the University of Bremen.[28] This model proposes that if a social media page provides information, entertainment, anDeconomic value, we are likely to follow that brand page. When we follow a fan page of a brand, we develop more positive attitudes toward the brand than we previously had. We can also conclude that if we have more positive attitudes toward the brand, we are more

likely to buy it. Unfortunately there is no conclusive evidence that this model holds true, as it is very difficult to experimentally test.

Figure 10.4 The Attitude toward a Fan Page Model. Source: Kleine-Kalmer, B./Burmann, C. (2012):



Social Media Campaigns

A German study found that 51% of all communication initiated by brands on Twitter were dialogues, followed by news (32%) and campaigns (17%).[20] Since dialogues and news are hard to categorize, we looked at what kinds of campaigns are shared in social media.[29] In August–September 2012, my seminar student analyzed the latest fifty Facebook campaigns and fifty Twitter campaigns featured on the three major social media monitoring sites in Japan. The results were quite insightful; however, there were not many "original" social media campaigns. Only 4% of the campaigns were related with check-ins and there were no campaigns that involved using QR codes, collecting points, treasure-hunting, forming interest groups, urging consumers to learn more about the brand, or gaining more friends in social media. Most of the campaigns consisted of an invitation to answer a question or send a photo/video in social media. Interestingly, about three quarters of the campaigns were not directly related to the sponsoring brands. Perhaps, because of the popularity of Celebrities on TV, there were a significant number of celebrity-related social media campaigns.

Figure 10.5 Typical Gifts Awarded in Social Media Campaigns

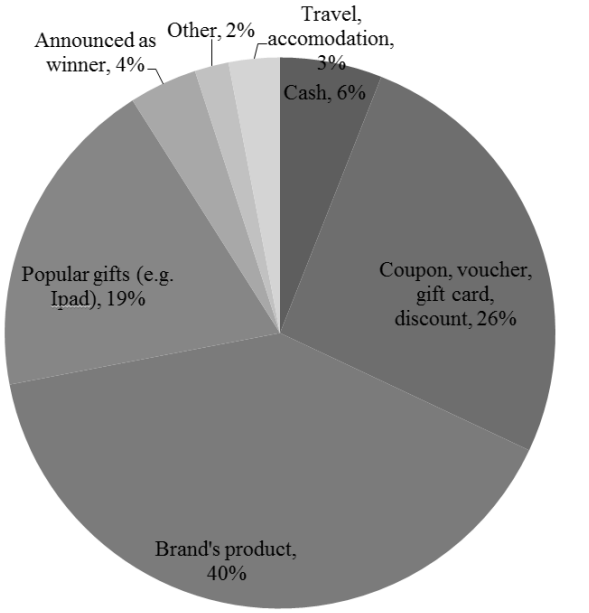
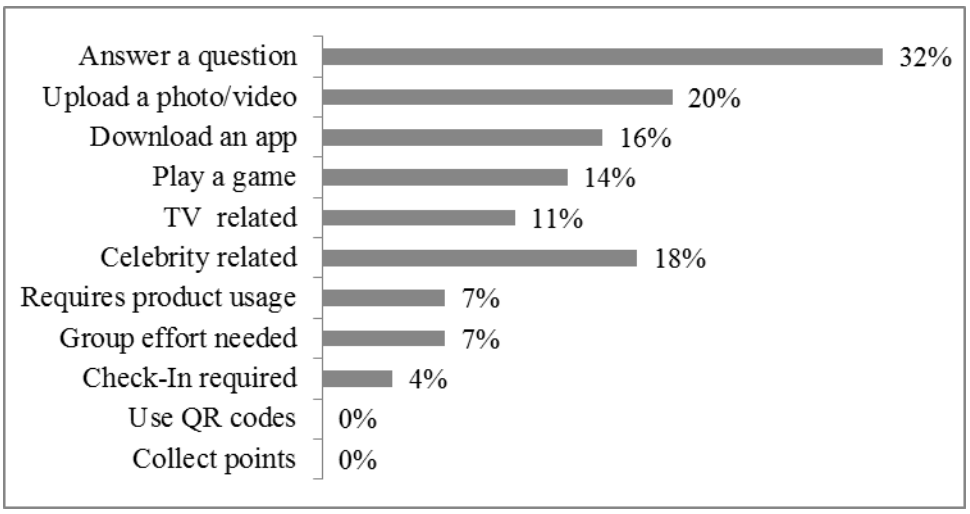


Figure 10.6 Content Analysis of 100 Social Media Campaigns in Japan



CHAPTER XI

Culture & Social Media

Definition

In 1952, anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn gathered more than 164 definitions of culture.[1] In the following table, which shows only six of them, most emphasize the aspect of a shared mindset. No matter how it is defined and conceptualized, culture exists, and it changes how people think and act based on which society they live in.

Table 11.1 Definitions of Culture

"The ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular people or society." [2]
"The system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning."[3]
"The learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings." [4]
"The shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them." [5]
"A way of thinking, feeling, believing. It is the knowledge stored up (in memories of men, in books and objects) for future use—patterns for doing certain things in certain ways, not the doing of them." [6]
"Culture is the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values."[7]

Culture & Values

In order to understand how culture impacts communication, we first have to understand its relationship with common values, since, according to the iceberg theory of culture,[8] beliefs and values drive how people talk to each other. Values are defined as "conceptions of the desirable that influence the way people select action and evaluate events"[9] and several different values such as freedom of speech, parent-child relationships, loyalty to authority, perseverance, respect for the elderly, etc., can be reduced to two basic dimensions: rationalist versus traditionalist values and survival versus self-expressive values.[10] A large-scale study conducted in more than thirty countries showed that most nations in the southern hemisphere, particularly in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and South Asia, tend to have strong religious values and are traditionalist.[10] Countries in the northern hemisphere and ex-Communist bloc countries usually have a loose view of religion and overall choose rationalism over traditional values. The split between self-expressive and survival values is seemingly related with a country's development level, except in Latin America. Industrialized nations place heavier value on freedom of speech, environmental protection, and social equality, while underdeveloped and developing nations give priority to job security and one's own safety.[10]

Culture & Cognition

Richard Nisbett[11] of the University of Michigan conducted several experiments during the early 2000s and provided a comprehensive view of why people from the East and West think differently. He noticed that Easterners (people from East Asia) and Westerners (people from Europe and North America) have systematic differences in terms of perceptional focus on saliency versus context, taxonomic categorization versus relational categorization, future stability versus future change, emphasis on logic versus emphasis on intuition, ultimate correctness versus need for the middle way, etc.[12] For instance, when subjects from both cultures were asked to remember a picture of a pond to which they had been previously exposed, most Western subjects remembered salient objects such as a big carp and a frog, while Eastern subjects remembered the background as well. In another experiment that asked respondents to put a cow, grass, and a chicken into two groups, most Eastern subjects chose to group cow and grass together—as cows eat grass—but Western subjects thought cow and chicken should be grouped together as they both are animals [11.]

Most of Nisbett's findings[11] were based on the premise that Westerners have an independent self-construal compared with Easterners' interdependent self-construal. A number of recent studies have tested this argument. Two researchers[13] asked U.S. and Chinese subjects to list their most unforgettable memories. While the majority of U.S. respondents talked about individual achievements and individual emotions they had experienced, Chinese ones mostly cited social events. Similarly, in a perspective-taking experiment[14] where participants are supposed to understand what their partner is looking at without seeing their partner, Chinese students could easily take the view of their partners, while most of the American students failed the task. A brain-scan study[15] further explored the differences between Americans and Asians by asking subjects to think about personal traits and the traits of their mothers. As one may contemplate, the activity in the brain associated with self-perception was increased for American subjects only when thinking about the self. However, for Chinese participants, this area was activated both when thinking about the self and mother, a finding that provides neurological support for culturally driven cognitive differences.

Richard Nisbett provided some philosophical, socio-psychological, and sociological explanations of East-West differences.[11] The principles of linear versus circular logic and refusal of contradiction versus acceptance of contradiction in Western culture, according to Nisbett, changed how these societies started to think differently. Furthermore, Taoism and Confucianism, which promote interconnectedness and constant change in nature, influenced categorization of the things in our environment and perception of an absolute truth. The Asian belief that nature constantly changes makes it difficult to accept that things and artifacts can have an ultimate shape, as their current state is considered temporary. In the same line, because of the yin and yang philosophy (every truth has an error and every error has a truth in it), Easterners believe that the relationship of the object with its environment is more important than what it is made of. We tested these assumptions[16] in a survey where we asked American and Japanese subjects to write down any single word that occurred to them when looking at pictures of different animals. We then grouped the words' subjects used according to the WordNet categorization system. As we hypothesized, Eastern subjects listed words that relate to *group* and *relationship*, compared to Western subjects whose words had more references to *substance* and *shape*. These findings supported Nisbett's propositions that North Americans are less field-dependent and pay less attention to relationships between objects and environment.

Culture & Its Dimensions

Since culture is a very complicated concept that can relate to everything from music to food and art to education, some scholars created a typology to compare cultures to each other. Among these, the two notable authors whose cultural dimensions are well known are Hofstede[17] and Hall.[18] Both of the authors classified cultures into the groups originally introduced by Kluckhohn based on human relations, relations between people and nature, perception of time, and perception of self.[6] Of course, each culture is unique and these classifications have their own criticisms,[19,20] but they constitute a theoretical base for why we should or should not expect difference between any given two countries when it comes to social media usage. These cultural models cannot explain the individual or sub-group differences that exist in every country, but give good insights on why two nations may differ as a whole.[19] In other words, cultural dimensions are useful to measure subconsciously driven and tradition-based behavior, but not useful to test consciously driven behavior that show individual or sub-group variation.[21] Some other criticisms for using cultural dimensions to compare countries exist since some countries include minorities and subgroups that have different values,[18] GDP or income inequality that may play a larger role,[22] gender differences that may exceed the effects of culture,[23] the fact that people may change their values after individual experiences[24] (e.g., learning a new language), universal human nature and universal values that may be stronger than cultural values,[25] and the prevalence of globally connected communication mediums that may have reduced cross-cultural differences.[25]

Hall's High- & Low-Context Typology

Hall[18] argued that cultures can be rated on a continuum called the high- and low-context continuum based on the role immediate environment and social roles play in daily conversations and business interactions. In cultures where context is not so important, people usually prefer expressive, direct, formal, and written

statements. On the other hand, in high-context cultures, there is a tendency to value indirect, informal, symbolic, and visually expressive statements. Hall suggested that Japanese, Middle Easterners, and Latin Americans have a high-context culture, whereas Northern Europeans and English-speaking countries have a low-context culture. As he and his coauthor explain:

> *Japanese, Arabs, and Mediterranean people, who have extensive information networks among family, friends, colleagues, and clients and who are involved in close personal relationships, are high-context. As a result, for most normal transactions in daily life they do not require, nor do they expect, much in-depth, background information. Low-context people include Americans, Germans, Swiss, Scandinavians, and other northern Europeans; they compartmentalize their personal relationships, their work, and many aspects of day-to-day life. Consequently, each time they interact with others they need detailed background information.*(page 6)

As can be inferred from Hall's explanation, there is a relationship between collectivistic group values and high-context communication because *context* mostly refers to shared background, information, and beliefs. In high-context cultures information exchange usually takes place between people who are in the same group and who know about each other's background, hence there is no need for direct and detailed statements. Hall also states that even in low-context cultures, people who have much in common, such as couples, family members, or those who live in small villages, usually use a high-context communication style.

In high-context communication, most information is not verbalized but communicated by nonverbal cues (silence, facial expressions, body language, etc.).[18] Therefore, the listener can be as active as the speaker and is expected to pick up information by reading between the lines. The listener must guess the meaning of the speaker according to the context of the conversation, the social role of the speaker, and social norms. In low-context communication, most of the job is done by the speaker and he or she has to be as direct and detailed as possible to make sure the listener can clearly understand everything. As a result, people from high-context cultures rely more on verbal cues and feel uncomfortable when there is silence or when people "beat around the bush."[18]

Hall also states that people in high-context societies prefer "indirect" messages that are implicit, ambiguous, understated, and vague compared to low-context societies where directness, clarity, preciseness, or "telling it as it is" are cultural norms.[18] An indirect communication style that includes the use of hints, insinuations, and metaphors exists in all cultures, but is particularly common in countries influenced by Confucianism and the notion of *face* (public image).[26] In these societies, it is believed that one loses face when publicly rejected or refused or has said something that can make him or her feel embarrassed.[26] That is why people put special emphasis on being extra-polite and not using direct statements to avoid causing someone to "lose face." Hall[18] indicated that people from high-context cultures, which promote group values, collectivism, and harmony rather than personal achievements, tend to put more emphasis on contextual cues and send out implicit messages because sending direct and explicit messages may disturb and damage group harmony. It is not surprising that Japanese people have sixteen different ways[27] of saying *no* without ever directly saying *no*.

Written forms of indirect or high-context communication also tend to be emotional and nonlinear.[21,28] Since message processing in high-context communication is based on intuitions, facts and direct logic are not valued as much as emotional expressions.[21] Simply put, low-context cultures tend to be linear (*a* causes *b* and *b* causes *c*), use inductive logic (if it is *c* we must accept *x*) and prefer directly getting to the point. On the other hand, an essay written by someone from a high-context culture may talk about many things before eventually making a broad statement about the topic as a conclusion. In the same vein, printed forms of communication materials or websites from high-context cultures tend to employ more images and illustrations because pictures are better for symbolism and metaphor use compared to the formal nature of text.[21]

Supporting these propositions, studies found that Japanese advertisements had less information and more indirect, emotional, and symbolic references compared to those in the United States.[29,30] Similarly, it was found that Chinese consumers preferred more transformational ads that emphasize how products enrich

people's lives versus informational ads that are mostly about product descriptions and explanations of product features. In the same vein, manuals in low-context cultures tend to be loaded with information and direct explanations of how to use the product, while manuals from high-context societies have more images, logos, and company history.[32] A content analysis also showed that American websites used more persuasive sales messages and explicit product information compared to Japanese sites.[33] Overall, companies tend to be indirect and employ implicit "soft-selling" messages because consumers in high-context places are uncomfortable with hard-sell strategies that provide a lot of factual information that emphasize the product's superiority.[21]

High/Low Context Communication & Information Communication Technologies

It is clear that the contextual aspect of communication impacts how new technologies are adopted and used worldwide. For instance, a research team from Samsung concluded that people from high-context cultures would prefer text messaging versus voicemail on mobile phones because it would go against the culture to talk to a machine without someone listening.[34] In the same vein, people in low-context countries are more likely to use print media and the Internet and also read more books and choose informational content over entertaining content.[21] A study that analyzed posts on online forums found that Indian users, who are members of a high-context culture, posted more emoticons and less private information than those from Germany.[35] Regarding emoticons, it is argued that Japanese people prefer *kaomoji* (example: *-*) over emoticons (example: :)) because kaomoji emphasize the face and may be considered more expressive than the horizontal type of emoticons.[36]

Several studies investigated online communication in the East and West and the results are interesting. A study that compared U.S. and Korean Internet users found that Americans paid more attention to verbal versus pictorial information and used online communities less compared to Koreans. It also found that websites in high-context cultures use more human elements (personifications), employ more visual elements, and emphasize high-context values, such as close family bonding, than those in low-context cultures.[28] When it comes to direct versus indirect written communication, it was observed that websites in Japan utilize symbolic communication more frequently than those in the United States. People from low-context cultures also seem more comfortable with stating their opinions and feelings directly in the online world; a study showed that emails and instant messages of people from low-context cultures included more sentiments and opinions compared to people from high context cultures.[39]

High/Low Context Communication & Social Media

Recently we observed that Japanese students ask fewer questions on Twitter and tweet less frequently about news compared to American students.[40] We hypothesize this is mostly because asking questions publicly may be perceived as a threat to harmony in Japan. Additionally, as Hall[18] indicated, people in high-context cultures pay less attention to informational content and prefer to get their news from their friends and family networks rather than media sources. Similarly, we also confirmed that Japanese companies ask fewer questions both on Twitter and Facebook and post fewer tweets.[41] A similar study found that Americans used social media more frequently than Singaporeans, who, on the other hand, shared more visual posts instead of textual posts compared to their U.S. counterparts.[23] Another recent study that looked at emoticons used on Twitter found that Japanese and Korean tweets include vertical smile emoticons that emphasize eyes versus those horizontal smiles in the Western world.[42] Since both Japan and Korea have high-context cultures, apparently people from these cultures put more emphasis on clearly displaying their emotions even in a limited space. The study also mentioned that Asians usually display their smiles with their eyes while Westerners look for a big open mouth in a smile.

There are also some other examples of how context-based communication impacts social media use. Recently, it was found[43] that French Canadians, who may be considered more high-context communicators than English-speaking Canadians, use social media less than their English-speaking neighbors, as one may expect that people from high context prefer face-to-face over computer-mediated communication. However, two recent studies found contradictory evidence for the contextual communication hypothesis. First, a study that

investigated Q&A sites[44] concluded that Asians, particularly the Chinese, use online social networks to ask questions to their social network members more often than American and European users, who preferred face-to-face communication. Second, it was observed that American college students put more emphasis on entertainment than did Korean students,[45] even though people from low-context cultures usually prefer information over entertainment. It is possible that the need for social approval and support in Asia mediates the effects of context-based communication.

Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions

Geert Hofstede,[17] a Dutch researcher specialized in organizational culture, sent questionnaires about social life and workplace culture to more than 100,000 respondents from over forty different countries between 1960 and 1980. Although these questionnaires were very long and included questions ranging from child-rearing to gender roles, he determined that all cross-cultural value and belief differences could be explained by five simple dimensions. Follow-up studies validated his dimensions, and a Google Scholar search indicates that his theory has now been cited more than 30,000 times. Different from Hall's high/low context continuum, Hofstede gives each country an index score (ideally between 0 and 100) on each dimension so that any given two countries can be compared based on these scores (e.g., the United States' individualism score is 91, whereas Guatemala scores 6 on the same dimension).

The following are the five dimensions of culture introduced by Hofstede:[17]

Power distance refers to the perception of a power gap between different segments of society, such as the elderly and young people, managers and subordinates, and teachers and students. In societies where there is higher power distance, more inequality among people and a less even distribution of economic wealth would be common. HofsteDeclaims that in societies where a small number of people control power, subordinates learn not to question the Decisions of the authority and tend to act submissively. In other words, it is not only unequal distribution of social power but also the acceptance of inequality, such as the caste system. Low power-distance societies, on the other hand, promote equal opportunity for all citizens. The top-scoring countries are Malaysia, Panama, and Guatemala and the lowest-scoring countries are Austria, Israel, and Denmark.

Table 11.2 The Differences Between High/Low Power-Distance Countries (Source: Hofstede, 2001, p. 107)

High Power Distance	Low Power Distance
People who are in power have privileges	People have equal rights
Authority is centralized	Authority is Decentralized
Sudden changes often happen in government	Changes in governments are infrequent
Corruption is common	Corruption is less common
Teachers control everything in class	Students initiate conversations in class
Many supervisors at work	Few supervisors
Large countries with unequal income distribution	Small countries with equal wealth distribution

The *individualism/collectivism continuum* represents the degree of individualistic versus collectivist tendencies that exist in each society. Individualistic societies put more value on achieving individual potential and personal freedom. According to Hofstede, members of individualistic societies usually believe equality is less important than freedom, individual Decisions are more practical and effective, privacy is something that should be deeply respected, and confrontations are part of daily life. As the name suggests, individualistic societies tend to emphasize individual autonomy and collectivistic societies stress the importance of group harmony.

In individualistic societies people form more relationships than collectivistic countries but those relationships usually are considered to be weak, whereas people from collectivistic countries would have fewer but very strong relationships. The reason for this difference is high social mobility in individualistic countries and also

the individualistic notion that everyone should be responsible and take care of themselves first. In collectivistic societies, on the other hand, people tend to think that they should take care of their families and group members. Studies showed that the more developed a country, the more individualistic it becomes. The top-scoring countries on this dimension are the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom and the bottom-scoring countries are Guatemala, Ecuador, and Panama.

Table 11.3 The Differences Between High/Low Individualism Countries

High Individualism	Low Individualism
High social mobility, large middle class	Low social mobility, small middle class
Self-control, self-help, and individual autonomy encouraged	People get help and support from others
Live in separate houses	People live together
Less contact with extended family members	Frequent contact with extended family members
Rely on media for information	People get information from their social network members
Likely to have insurance	People rely on their social network members in case of emergency
More divorces and fewer children	
Students are taught how to learn	Students are taught how to do
Diploma means self-respect	Diploma means higher social status
Tend to be wealthy	Tend to be poorer
Low birth rate	High birth rate

Uncertainty avoidance simply means refraining from ambiguous situations. In uncertainty-avoidant cultures, people cannot perform well in unstructured and unfamiliar conditions, unlike some other cultures where ambiguity is part of daily life. Members of uncertainty-avoidant countries do not want frequent changes in society and tend to have conservative values. One should note that risk avoidance and uncertainty avoidance are different concepts. According to Hofstede, in countries where high uncertainty avoidance is common, people tend to express their emotions openly, have negative attitudes toward diversity and foreigners, do not want to involve themselves with politics, and form tight groups and societies. The top-scoring countries are Greece, Portugal, and Guatemala and the lowest-scoring countries are Singapore, Jamaica, and Denmark.

Table 11.4 The Differences Between High/Low Uncertainty Avoidance Countries

High Uncertainty Avoidance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance
Conservative, traditionalist	Less conservative, open to change
Emotions expressed openly	Emotions are suppressed
Negative attitudes toward immigrants	Diversity is good for society
Only risks in familiar situations taken	Unknown risks are taken
Less interest in politics	Interest in politics
Identity cards are very important	Identity cards are not required everywhere
Less involvement in volunteer activities	High involvement in volunteer activities
Speeding limits are strict	Speeding limits are low
Expert/specialist advice commonly sought	Do-it-yourself mentality is common
Taboos are clearly identified	Taboos are not an important part of daily life
Unwilling to live abroad	Willing to live abroad
Children are taught that people are dangerous	Children are taught that people are benevolent
Extensive legislative system	Legislative system is simpler

Masculinity means higher preference for competition and achievement in society. As the name explains, masculine societies have the culture of males, favoring assertiveness and competition in order to gain materialistic benefits. In the same vein, feminine cultures value nurturing and caring for others. Masculine cultures also have clear and well-defined gender roles where males usually dominate, whereas in feminine

cultures males and females are usually treated equally. People coming from masculine cultures value work, support the strong and powerful, prefer big organizations over small organizations, and tend to be conservative. The most masculine cultures are Japan, Hungary and Austria and the least masculine societies are Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands.

Table 11.5 The Differences between High/Low Masculinity Countries

High Masculinity	Low Masculinity
Economic growth is more important than the environment	Environment is more important than economic growth
Fewer female parliament members	More female parliament members
Preference for high salary and more working hours	Preference for lower salary and fewer working hours
Family is always more important than friends	Sometimes friends may be as important as family
Boys and girls have different majors	Boys and girls have similar majors
Homosexuality is taboo	Homosexuality should be accepted
Performance is more important than everything	Social adaptation is more important than performance
Material success is more important than quality of life and other people's needs	Material success is less important than quality of life and other people's needs
Tropical climates	Cold to moderate climates

Long-term orientation is having a future focus when making Decisions. Just like collectivist societies, long-term oriented societies value tolerance for others, harmony, and humility. According to Hofstede, long-term orientation is similar to having Chinese values, which are highly influenced by Confucianism. In long-term oriented societies, people put special emphasis on perseverance, savings, and frugality, while saving one's face and relationships with others come first in short-term oriented societies. For instance, in short-term oriented cultures one may easily argue with one's manager while knowing that the argument may cost him or her their job. China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan are the top-scoring countries and Pakistan, West Africa, and the Philippines score the lowest.

Table 11.6 The Differences Between High/Low Long-Term Orientation Countries

Long-Term Orientation	Short-Term Orientation
Persist, good results will eventually come	Expect quick results
Leisure time is not so important	Leisure time is very important
It takes time to develop business relationships and gain trust	It doesn't take much time to establish business relations

Cultural Dimensions & Computer-Mediated Communication

Past studies show that Hofstede's dimensions can successfully explain whether people adopt new communication channels and, if they do, how they use them. For instance, there is a clear negative relationship between percentage of households that own a computer and a country's uncertainty avoidance score.[32] Similarly, Internet adoption is positively related with individualism and negatively related with uncertainty avoidance.[21] People from individualistic countries are also more likely to shop online compared to those who are from collectivistic, high uncertainty-avoidance, and high power-distance countries.[21] Overall, people from collectivistic cultures are likely to be less comfortable exchanging messages online than offline, as recently it was found that Chinese participants talked less in brainstorming sessions that were videoconferenced and talked more in textual idea-exchange sessions compared to American participants. Some studies found that individualistic and collectivistic people in fact use the Internet in similar frequencies, but for different purposes; for instance, people in Korea are more likely use the Internet to participate in online communities compared to their American counterparts.[47] Furthermore, it may be the case that individualistic societies are

more active online than offline, as a study comparing U.S. and Chilean activists showed that Chileans had more activities offline to create and maintain a social movement compared to U.S. activists, who were more active online.[48]

Cultural Dimensions & Online Learning

It is surprising that cultural dimensions can predict adoption and utilization of online learning tools. A study found that it took people from high power-distance countries more time to learn an e-learning activity compared to those from other countries.[49] When researchers analyzed the use of an e-learning platform by international students from eleven different countries, they also found that high uncertainty avoidance is negatively related with memorability, as learners from uncertainty avoiding countries had lower memorability scores.[50] Moreover, when Japanese students, who have collectivistic values, and U.S. students, who have individualistic values, had to work together online, there were many misunderstandings as the Japanese students found the Americans unstructured and too quick to make a Decision, while the Americans thought the Japanese were unemotional and conservative.[51]

Cultural Dimensions & Social Media

People from different cultures seem to use social media differently and Hofstede's dimensions, particularly individualism, can explain some of the variation. For instance, people from individualistic cultures are usually more active reacting to unwanted pictures[23] in which they are tagged on Facebook. Along the same lines, it was found[52] that people from individualistic cultures tend to post more photos, self-promote more often, and have larger social networks and more friends whom they haven't met face-to-face. The same study also found that people from individualistic cultures report higher life satisfaction. Additionally, it seems there is a relationship between individualism and social capital.[53] While American users tend to form bonding social capital and use the communication functions of social networks, Korean and Chinese users usually use expert search and connection functions to build bridging and bonding social capital.

As mentioned above, people from high uncertainty-avoidance countries were less likely to adopt the Internet and it seems uncertainty avoidance also correlates with the way people use social media. In interest networks and CoPs (communities of practice), members from high uncertainty-avoidance cultures usually look for precise information from authoritative figures, while people from low uncertainty-avoidance cultures pay attention to everyone's opinions and ideas.[54] When it comes to status updates, college students in the United States are more likely to post extreme information[55] in addition to obscene or improper content (alcohol use, misbehavior, etc.)[56] in social media than do students in Germany, a country that has a relatively high uncertainty-avoidance score. The way people use social scheduling tools also depends on culture. An analysis of a scheduling platform showed that Germans usually schedule events twenty-eight days in advance compared to Colombians, who schedule events only twelve days prior to the actual activity.[57]

A number of studies compared and contrasted social media use in China, a collectivistic and long-term oriented society, and the United States, an individualistic and short-term oriented society. When American, Chinese, and Indian users were compared, it was observed that Americans have the highest concern for privacy,[58] reflecting a culture driven by autonomy and independence. What's more, Chinese users of social networking services (SNS) usually don't post self-promoting content in social media because they don't care about being popular online.[59] They also don't spend as much time as Americans on online social networking (28 minutes a day in China vs. 52 minutes a day in the United States).[59] Compared to Facebook users, users of Renren (a Chinese SNS platform) are more likely to use a customized or digitally adjusted profile photo.[60] This may not result from a need for a polished image but rather avoidance of directly presenting oneself in a way that may not be approved by others.

Cultural Dimensions & Business Communications

When it comes to business communications, culture may still be an important factor that impact brands' social media practices worldwide. We recently compared a one-week activity of the top hundred brands in Japan and the top hundred brands in the United States and detected systematic differences.[41] Overall, Japanese brands

asked fewer questions, posted less frequently, did not address their fans directly, did not initiate conversations, revealed less info on brand profiles, and did not allow fans to post on their walls. We suggested that most of these differences occur because of the "high power distance" in Japan that gives more social power to corporations than individuals, who may feel strange when receiving messages about daily topics from big brands. In the same vein, 87% of Norwegian brands responded to questions asked of them on Facebook, while only 45% brands in the United King did so,[61] as Norway is a low power-distance country. A study that compared social networks in China and the USA found that while brand messages in the United States tended to emphasize individualism and hedonic consumption (personal enjoyment), messages in China emphasized popularity, social status, symbolism, and luxury.[62]

Culture & Facebook Use

Since culture impacts everything from what we eat to what we buy, it also affects what we do on Facebook. For instance, in the United States, people usually post about themselves (food, vacations, parties, etc.), whereas in India people post about their ideas, values, and interests (not necessarily about themselves).[63] Many Facebook photos flagged in India are related to religion, public figures, and beliefs. Another cross-cultural communication aspect of Facebook usage is related with unwanted tagging. On Facebook when people want others to delete a photo they usually send a message like "Would you please take it down?", while in Israel, where people are very direct, this message may say simply, "Take this down." On the other hand, in Japan people are reluctant to send any message to ask their friends to take down something that offends them.[63] The most interesting cross-cultural communication aspect of Facebook is perhaps related to nonverbal cues such as visual gestures and colors. When the Like button was first developed, it was to be symbolized by only a thumbs-up sign. This idea was rejected because in some cultures a thumbs-up is perceived as obscene.[64]

Since photo sharing is the core function of Facebook, several studies looked at what kind of photos people post. A study that analyzed pictures on Instagram (an app integrated with Facebook) showed that photos from Tokyo tend to have red-yellow tones while photos from New York have blue-gray tones.[65] Interviews with Namibian Facebook users uncovered that they prefer to post pictures focusing on an individual with less emphasis on the background or objects.[66] Perhaps driven by privacy concerns, about one-third of Indians do not post picture of themselves or their friends on Facebook, whereas in the US only a small fraction of people abstain from posting personal photos.[67] Similarly, compared to American college students a higher percentage of Middle Eastern college students chose not to show their faces in their profile photos,[68] although it is difficult to confirm that these findings are not related with females' religious concerns in the Middle East or difficulty of access to new technologies in developing countries.

When assessing the impact of Facebook on social life, we should take into account the varying Facebook penetration rates all around the world: while in Turkey 88% of Internet users have a Facebook account, only 17% of Japanese users are on Facebook.[69] The effects of Facebook usage on social life are likely to differ based on the percentage of the population using the service. It is reported that in the United Kingdom, where almost two-thirds of the population is on Facebook, one-third of divorces are related to Facebook use, and 10% of pets have a Facebook profile.[71] In the United States, the country with the largest Facebook population, 5% of the children have a Facebook page even before they are born.[72] Facebook penetration may influence how it will be used for public or private purposes, as we found that 74% of American states had an official Facebook page but this ratio was only 28% in Japan.[73]

Culture & Twitter Use

Just like Facebook usage, Twitter usage is also heavily influenced by culture. It is known that people from collectivistic cultures are more likely to mention someone (@user) in their tweets and there's a popularity imbalance among Twitter accounts in countries with higher power distance.[22] Although these results may be interpreted in several ways, apparently collectivistic people engage in more public conversations with others and in hierarchy-based societies (high power distance) people with more social power have an exponentially higher number of followers. Some other interesting culture-related findings are that the timing of Twitter updates and replies are more predictable in punctual societies with a higher pace of life score,[22] Brazilian users

post the most positive tweets in the world,[74] and (as a result of the country's collectivistic nature) Indonesia is more densely connected on Twitter than Australia.[74] Lastly, we should also remember that subculture also impacts Twitter usage. Different communities tweet in a different language: teachers use longer words, minorities tend to use words ending with *-in* instead of *-ing*, and Bieber fans add extra -e at the end of common words (e.g. pleasee).[75]

Global Use of Social Media

About 34% of people in large countries now reportedly have a social media account.[76] Although social media is ubiquitous, most of the elderly currently do not use these sites, particularly social networks. According to a Pew study, in eighteen out of twenty-one countries surveyed, the percentage of the elderly using social networks was less than 20%. On the other hand, in most major economies more than two-thirds of eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds have a social media account.[76] People usually share things related to movies and music in social media; however, most users in Arabic countries and Turkey share a significant amount of political messages and community-related issues.[76] When asked what they shared in the past month, most people answer with pictures (43%), followed by opinions (39%), and status updates (26%).[77] Turkish social media users tend to be the most active sharers (93% report sharing something online in the past month), whereas Japan ranks at the bottom, with 70% of Japanese users indicating that they haven't posted anything in social media within a month.[77] On the global scale, it appears that females, young people, and people with higher education and higher income tend to share more online content.[77]

CHAPTER XII

Global Social Media Use

Studies show that more than half the population in developed countries has experienced online social networking. What is more, a quarter of the world citizens now have a profile in social media, whose users number 1.47 billion[1]. Although English-speaking countries top the list of active social media–using nations, people from all around the world are represented on this new communication channel.

Figure 12.1 Top 20 Languages on Twitter. Source: Leetaru et al. (2013)[2]

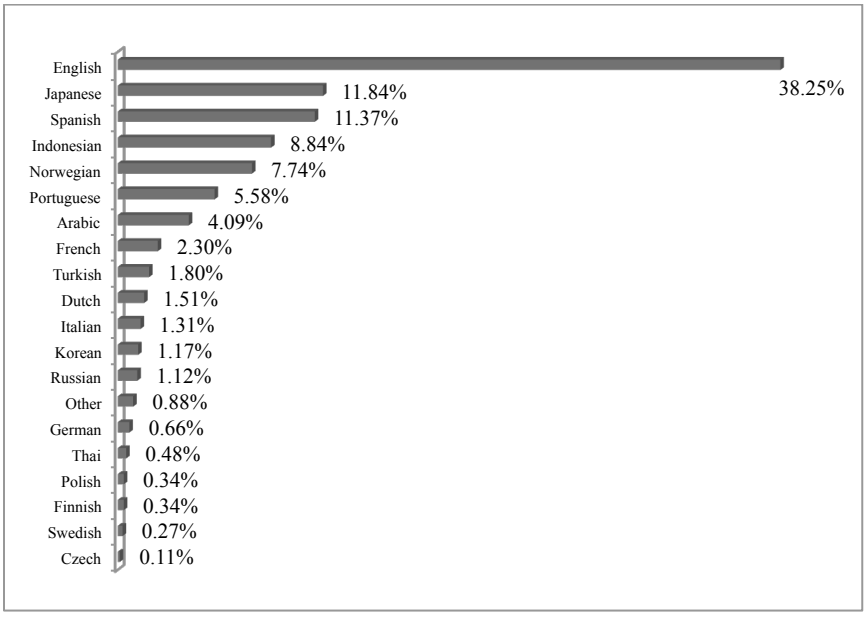
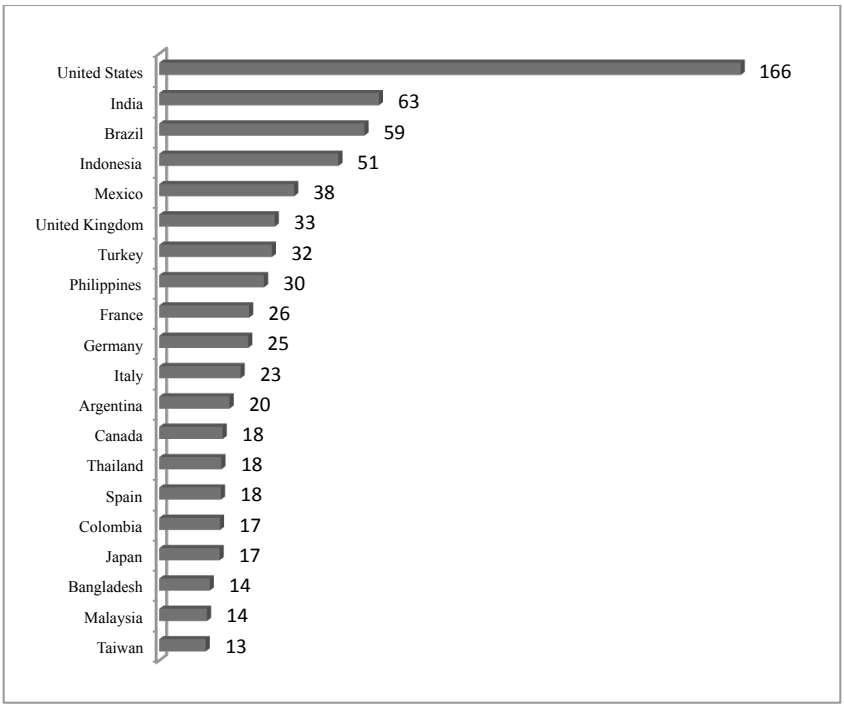


Figure 12.2 Top 20 Countries on Facebook (in millions)*

*These numbers are from Wikipedia and it is usually not recommended to use Wikipedia as an academic source. However, since these numbers are in line with our literature review and since we only want readers to look at the rankings rather than the numbers, we decided to use this source. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook_statistics



This study was inspired by an original report published by comScore [3] on December 21, 2011, with the title "It's a Social World." The study reported that three out of every four minutes spent online globally were for social networking, women were more active social media users than men, local social networks were on the rise, and the future of social media was to be determined by smartphones and tablets. The study also provided local social media usage intensity information for forty different countries around the world along with index scores. In each country comScore measured the percentage of people who have a social media account, the average time people spend for social networking, and the proportion of total time online spent on social networking. The data was adjusted for Internet penetration in each country and then every country was given an index score for these measurements. For instance on an index for the percentage of online population visiting social networks, Spain scored highest with 119 and Japan lowest with 70. These are not nominal percentage values but index scores according to the world average. Having these scores publicly available made us realize that these country-level usage intensity scores—for which there are already many datasets—can be used just like an individual-level data to understand the relationship between cultures and social media. All that was needed was to run an exploratory correlation analysis.

The comScore report used the "term social networks" throughout; however, the company treated all time spent on Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook and local networks the same as time spent on social networks. Since Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Ren Ren, Mixi and blogging platforms are simply considered as "social media," the word "social networks" in the Comscore report means exactly the same thing as "social media." Additionally, comScore measured the social media use intensity by using its Media Metrix method that relies on the internet panel recruited by the company. Advertising Research Foundation explains the methodology of Media Metrix as follows:

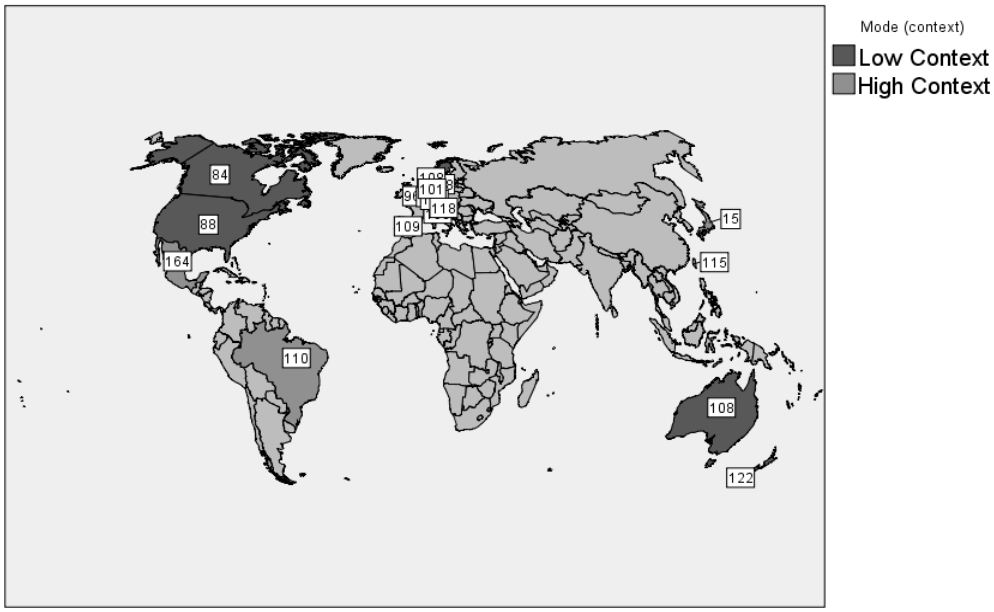
"The information retrieved from the panelists registered and active on the Internet includes all websites visited, viewing durations, and click streams. It captures delivery of pages, frames, banners and other display ads, videos and search engine queries, keywords used, and search ads served (although not all of this data is included in the Media Metrix offering.) All personally-identifiable information (PII) is stripped from the web pages on the panelists' machines before being transferred to the comScore collection server."(page 5Cook, W. A. & Pettit, R. C. (2009). comScore Media Metrix U.S. Methodology an ARF Research Review. Available online)4

Findings

High-context & Low-context Communication

Edward Hall[5], who introduced the concepts of high-context and low-context communication, made it very clear that it is just a continuum and countries do not have index scores ranking their place on the context continuum with reference to other nations. He also indicated that we should be careful using these high-low context labels for large countries like the United States, because obviously there would be many different ethnicities within the same country that communicate differently. At the same time, he implied that English-speaking, German-speaking, and Scandinavian countries are usually low-context nations and that Japan, China, and the Arab and Mediterranean countries tend to be high-context cultures. Based on this, we coded the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Switzerland as low-context and China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Spain, Italy, Brazil, and Mexico as high-context countries. When we compared the average scores with the Comscore data, the two groups scored almost the same, showing that high-context and low-context communication does not have anything to do with the social media engagement. Despite the small sample size we think this is a solid finding, because both East Asian and Latin countries are considered high-context; the Japanese and Chinese usually have the lowest level of engagement whereas Latin countries have the highest. Additionally, nowadays social media has become a social norm by all different types of people in all different cultures. Therefore, we should not expect any difference between high-context and low- context cultures in terms of usage intensity.

Figure 12.3 High-Context and Low-Context Countries' Index Scores of "Share of Time Spent for Online Social Networking"



Hofstede's Dimensions[6]

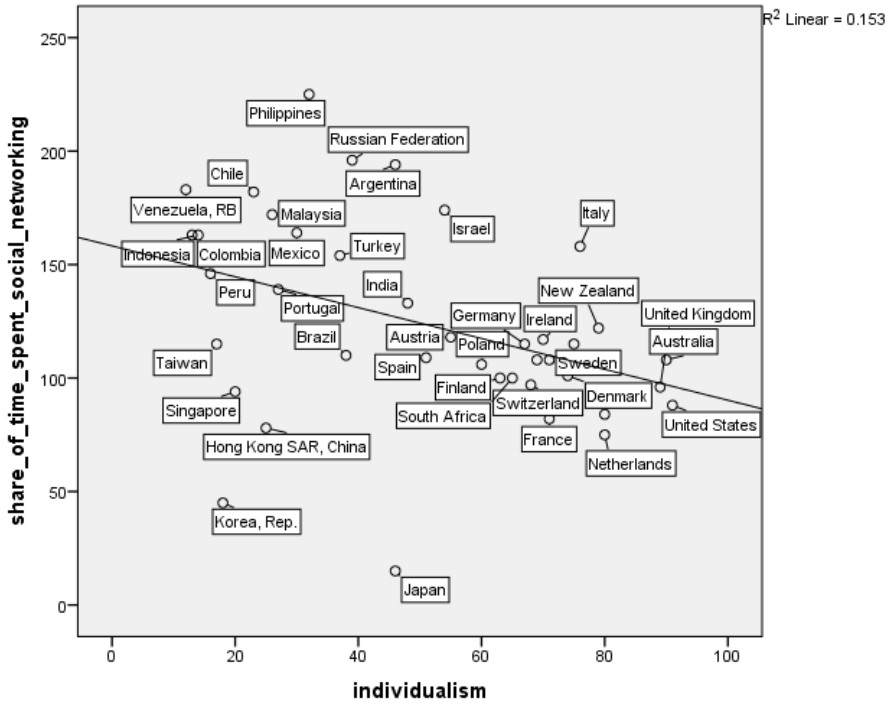
As seen in the graph below, there is a negative relationship between individualism and the proportion of online time spent for social networking. This negative relationship however does not hold true for the average time spent for social networking or the percentage of social media users in a country. Latin American countries consistently score higher than the world average in terms of time they use for browsing social media sites or engaging with their friends on social platforms compared to the time they spend online for other activities (e.g. reading mails, news, etc.). Latin Americans also spend more time on social media when compared to the rest

of the world. Although one may speculate that Westerners spend less time on social networking because they are busy with their jobs, we should remember that Latin Americans spend more time on social media than do other developing countries as well.

Japan and Israel stand out in the graph, as the Japanese spend very little time on social networking even though they are not an idiocentric society and Israelis spend the highest amount of time on social media even though they are not a highly collectivistic society. Furthermore, East Asian countries and Singapore clearly have low individualism scores and low ratios of social networking that contrast with the rest of other collective cultures from the Middle East and South East Asia. This implies that, in line with Professor Nisbett's[7] arguments[7] about limiting Easterners to East Asians, collectivistic countries that are influenced by Confucianism have a dramatically different social media behavior compared to those that are not influenced by Confucianism.

Readers should note that Western countries like the US or the UK do not necessarily spend less time for social networking; apparently people in these cultures do others things in addition to social networking on the internet. We found no significant relationship between other variables (see Appendixes for details).

Figure 12.4 Individualism and Share of Time Spent for Social Networking

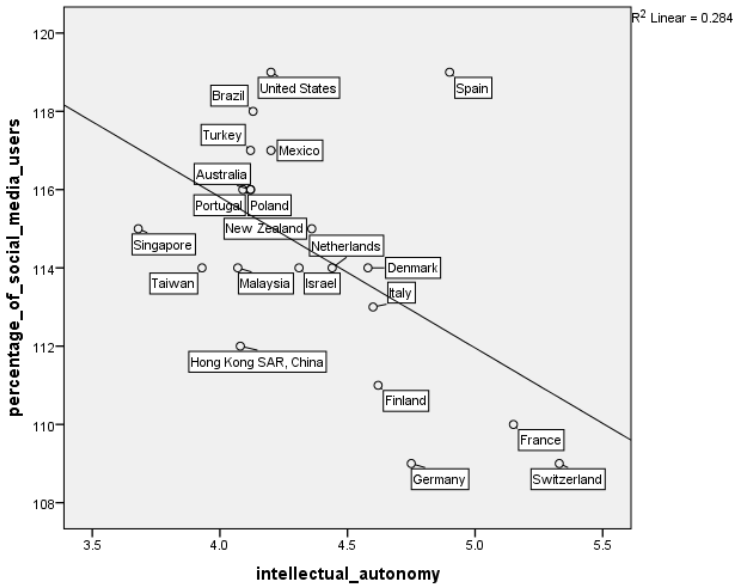


Schwartz' Dimensions[8]

Shalom Schwartz is a researcher from Hebrew University. Just like Hofstede he identified several dimensions of culture, including conservatism, hierarchy, harmony, egalitarianism, mastery, affective autonomy, and intellectual autonomy. Among these we only picked conservatism (respect for tradition), hierarchy (existence of power relationships), egalitarian commitment (concern about others' welfare), affective autonomy (individual pleasure seeking) and intellectual autonomy (individual information seeking) that were provided by Basabe and Ros. We ran correlations between Comscore's usage indexes and Schwartz's country index scores. Despite the small sample size, most of the relationships were statistically significant particularly intellectual autonomy and conservatism. Broadly speaking, *intellectual autonomy* is a culture's emphasis on mentally engaging individual activities, such as, the arts, creativity, and so on, and seems to be negatively correlated with the percentage of social media users in a country. This makes perfect sense as Northern European

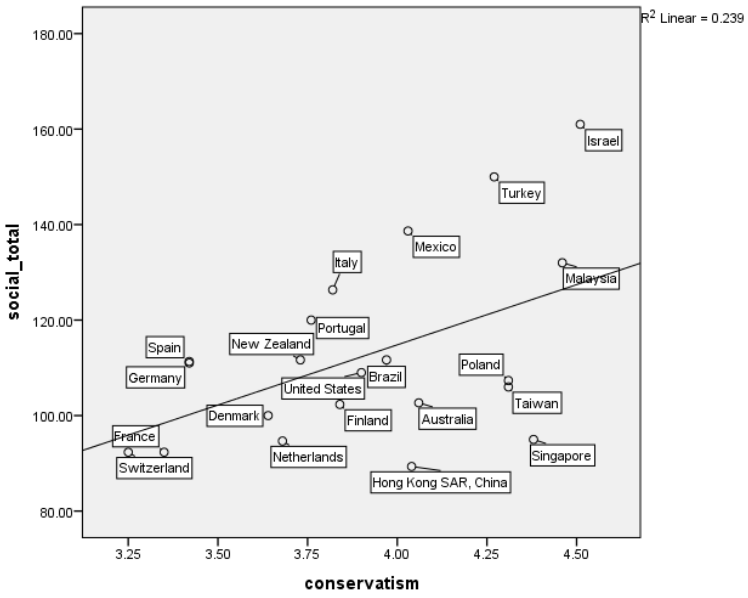
countries, which tend to be curious about other types of challenging activities and want to gather information about various things online, are less likely to be spending a lot of time using social networking channels.

Figure 12.5 Intellectual Autonomy and Global Social Media Penetration (Excluding Japan)



According to Schwartz, conservatism is very similar to "collectivism" introduced by Hofstede, where members of society pay more attention to being "embedded" in their social groups. "In conservative societies personal interests are not seen as different from those of the group and high value is placed on preserving the status quo and avoiding individual actions and attitudes that might undermine the traditional order of things." (Gutterman, page 2) Conservative societies also tend to be more traditionalist and conservative. This graph makes it clear that Israel, Turkey, Malaysia and Mexico, the top social media users, also have very conservative and collectivistic values.

Figure 12.6 Conservatism and Global Social Media Use (Excluding Japan)



Trompenaars' Dimensions[9]

Fons Trompenaars, another Dutch scholar, is mostly known for his universalism and particularism concepts that stand for whether people think "rules are rules" or "rules are just rules" that may change according to different circumstances. He also claimed that cultures can be contrasted based on how people display emotions (shown or hidden), how people perceive success; ascribed (given by the authority), achieved (gained by individual achievements), how people perceive time (linear or circular), how people perceive their environment (inner or outer locus of control), how people perceive their society (group orientation vs. individual autonomy) and how people perceive their destiny (everything is linked or nothing is linked). He reduced all of these aspects of culture into two major dimensions that are egalitarian commitment –success is gained by individual achievements and relationships are not deep– and utilitarian involvement –family and social relations are more important than everything.

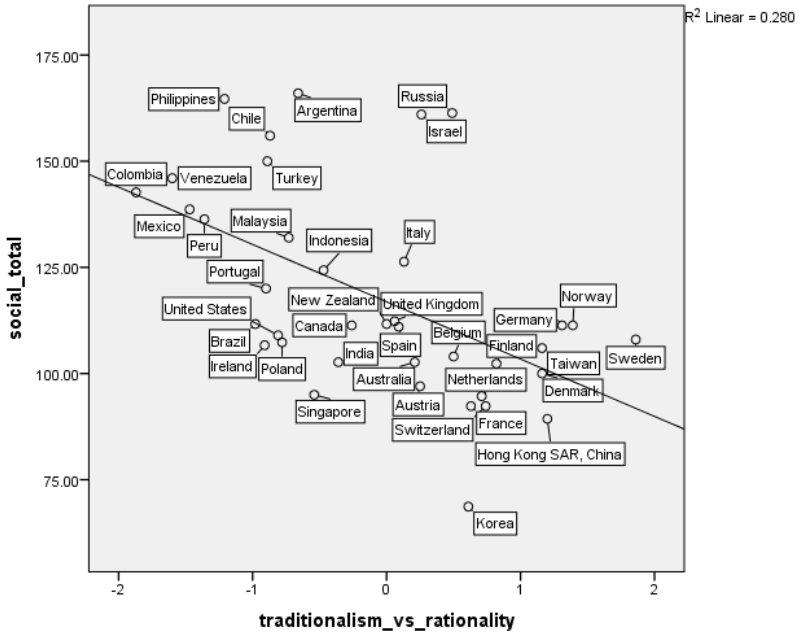
Our correlation analysis indicated that neither of these two dimensions could explain social media use. It may be because the dimensions became too broad when reduced down to two. See appendixes for more details.

World Values Survey[10]

As explained in the previous chapter, the World Values Survey, led by a famous cross-cultural scholar Ronald Inglehart, found that there are two major cultural dimensions, namely traditionalism vs. rationalism and survival vs. self-expressiveness. There seems to be a significant relationship between traditionalism and social media use. According to the official website of the institution that manages these surveys, traditionalism is similar to collectivism and religiosity. It is not a surprise that people in Israel (strongly Jewish), Russia (strongly Orthodox), Argentina, Philippines and Chile (strongly Catholic) have been using social media heavily as they feel an urge to be in touch with their society and make sure their conservative values are preserved. Of course, there can be other explanations as religious and traditionalist societies tend to be more collective and collectivism results with a higher need for connectedness.

One may expect that the survival vs. self-expressiveness dimension can successfully explain whether there is a country level interest in social media. However, usually countries that score high on this dimension tend to be underdeveloped and they were not included in the data analysis.

Figure 12.7 Traditionalism and Global Social Media Use



The GLOBE Dimensions[11]

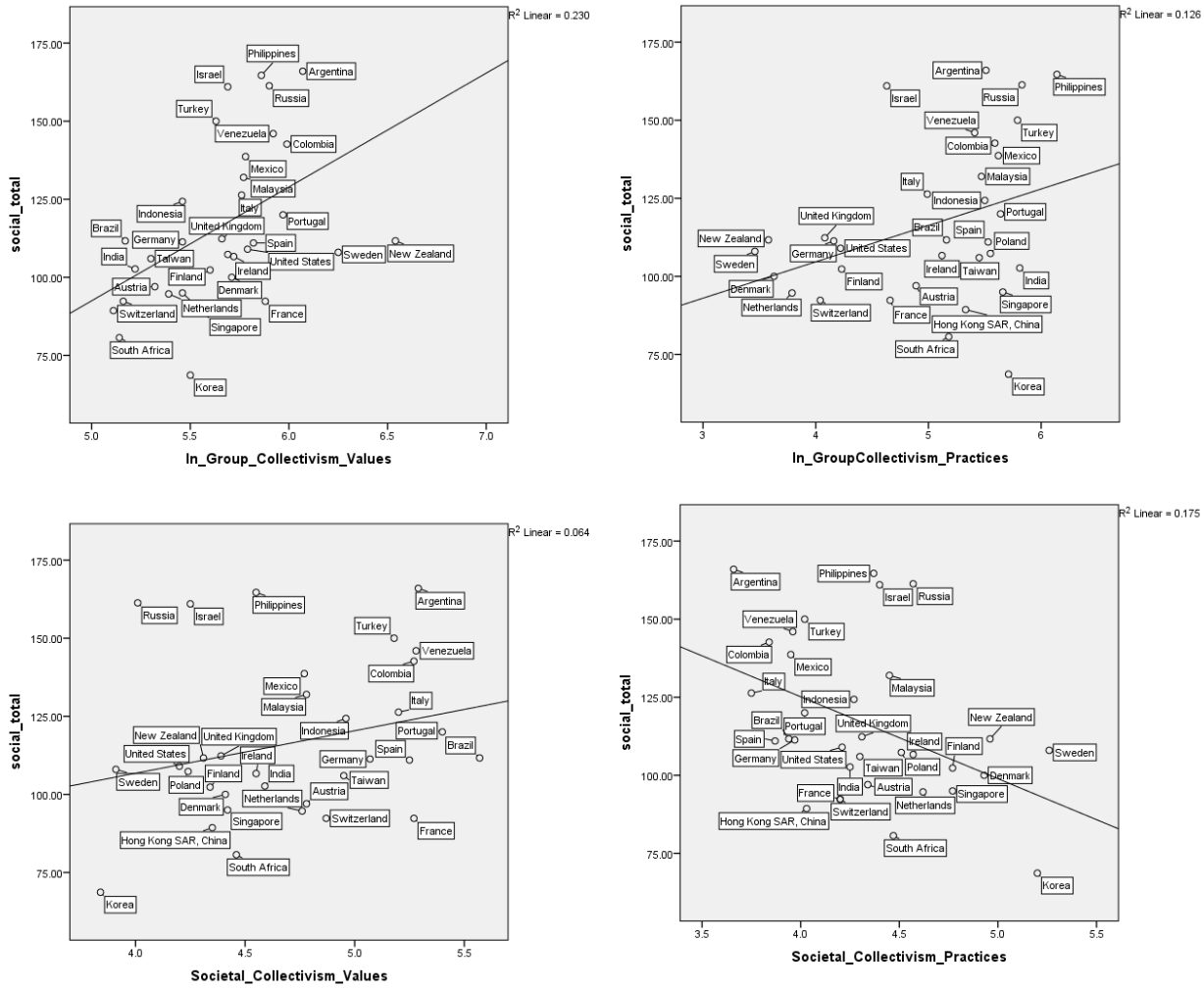
Similar to other cross-cultural scholars, a group led by Robert House from University of Pennsylvania, conducted several cross-cultural studies to identify the relationship between leadership and culture in 61 countries. The project GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) identified six aspects of culture that may impact how leaders are perceived around the world. It was found that leader effectiveness and leader acceptance were culture bound in that the same leader may be perceived incompetent in one culture and very competent in another culture. Additionally, Dr. House and his group believed that organizations may have different practices from ideal social norms and that's why they measured both values (how people are supposed to behave) and practices (how people actually behave) in each country.

Since these six elements of culture not only explain the leadership behavior but also reflect how people from different cultures communicate, we ran correlations between COMSCORE's usage intensity scores and GLOBE's country index scores. Not surprisingly, we observed that collectivism was the best predictor of social media use globally. Similar to Hofstede's, Shwartz' and Inglehart's findings, once again, collectivism, group attachment in broader terms, had the highest correlation coefficient among all the variables. It also appeared that the GLOBE dimensions may clarify our confusion over what aspects of collectivism predicts social media use.

As can be seen in the following graphs, in-group collectivism – the need to express attachment, loyalty and pride– had a more significant relationship with social media use compared to societal collectivism (collective action practices in organizations). Furthermore, when we focus on practices, rather than values, we see that societal collectivism actually has a negative relationship with social media use. As counterintuitive as it may sound, obviously in societies where social media use is common, there are not many organization level incentives to encourage collective action. The fact that in-group collectivism had a solid relationship with social media also explains why social media use is very low in East Asian countries like Japan, Korea and Hong Kong. These countries have collectivistic values but they don't necessarily feel a need to express their pride and attachment via computer mediated communication.

(Figures displayed from left to right)
Figure 12.8 In-Group Collectivism Values and Global Social Media Use
Figure 12.9 In-Group Collectivism Values and Global Social Media Use

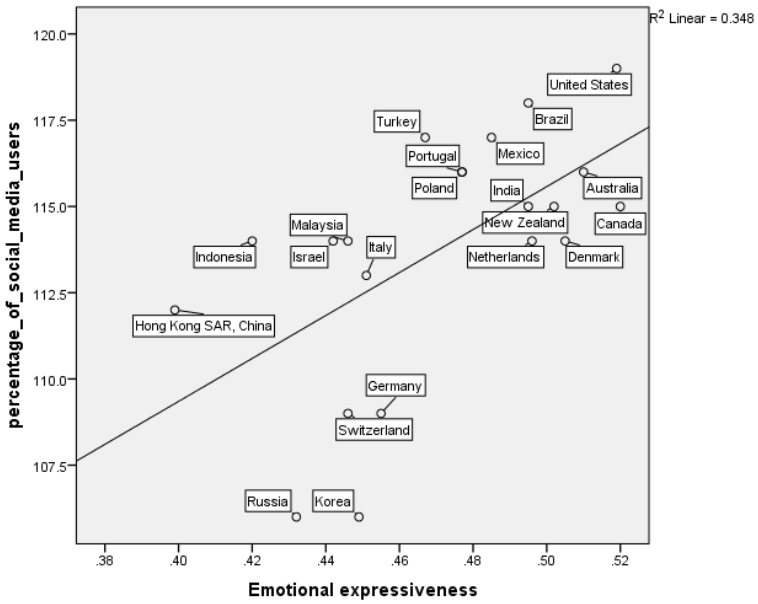
Figure 12.10 Societal Collectivism Values and Global Social Media Use
Figure 12.11 Societal Collectivism Practices and Global Social Media Use



Cross-cultural Emotional Expressiveness[12]

David Matsumoto, a famous cross-cultural psychologist, wanted to see if people show their emotions in the same intensity all around the world. He postulated that emotions regulate social adaptation and social interactions, particularly when it comes to conveying messages to those from outside one's own group. His findings showed that people from individualistic cultures and English-speaking countries showed their emotions more intensely, and Asians by and large suppressed their emotions. After surveying more than six thousand respondents from thirty-three countries, he managed to compare different nations on his emotional expressivity scale. In this study we wanted to see whether emotionally expressive countries use social media more or less. The results show that emotionally expressive countries are more likely to adopt social media than less emotionally expressive countries. Obviously, those who intensely express themselves feel a higher need to be in social media or people who are emotionally expressive feel more comfortable having social media presence.

Figure 12.12 Emotional Expressiveness and Global Social Media Use

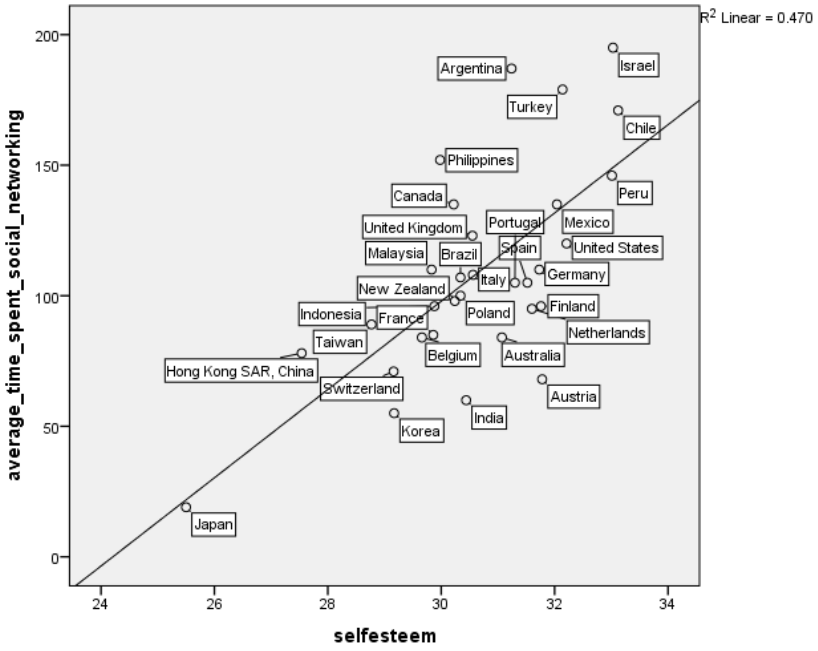


Self-Esteem

We found conflicting views about social media use and self-esteem during our literature review. While sharing one's own identity may boost his/her self-esteem, self-comparison to others and uploading content that is usually ignored may negatively impact one's esteem. [13] This debate is getting more intense, when recently after surveying more than 1000 people a research team from Sweden found that using Facebook reduces self-esteem. [14] To clarify the relationship between self-esteem and social media we looked at the average time spent for social networking and the country level self-esteem scores.

As can be seen in the following graph, the results implied that there must be a positive relation between self-esteem and social media use. Although Israel, Turkey and Chile may have little in common, their citizens have high self-esteem and spend a lot of time for social networking. More strikingly, Israel has the highest nation-level self-esteem and spends the highest amount of time for online social networking while Japan has the lowest nation-level self-esteem and spends the lowest amount of time for online social networking. This finding strengthens the argument that people with high self-esteem are comfortable sharing many things about themselves and/or their ideas thus don't mind spending time online, while people with low self-esteem are worried about how others will react to their posts and spend a shorter time on social networking sites (it is more time consuming to post content compared to browsing through what others posted).

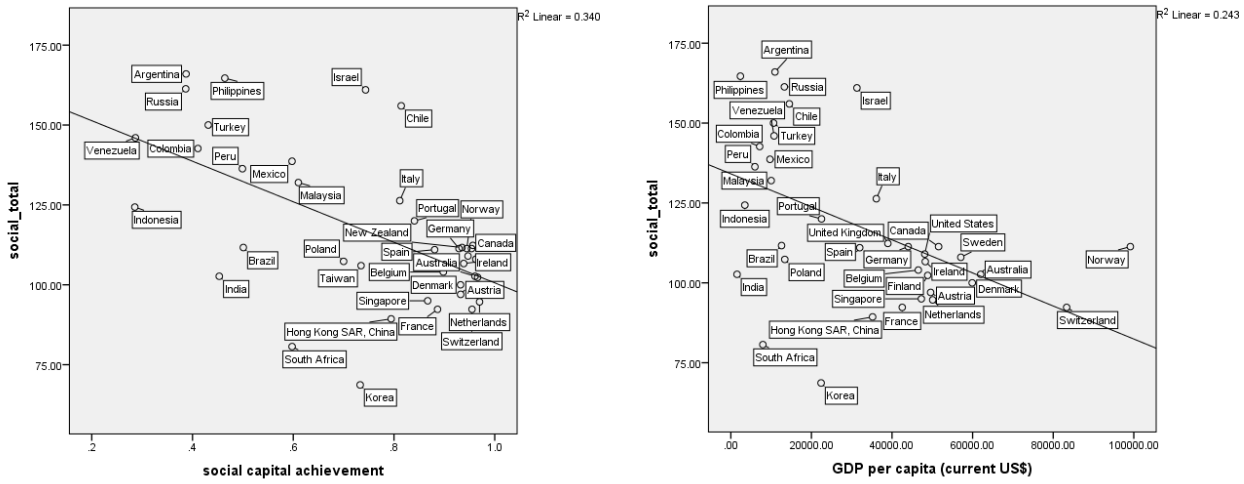
Figure 12.13 Self-Esteem and Global Social Media Use



Social Capital

Social capital is defined as the "resources (such as information, ideas, support) that individuals are able to procure by virtue of their relationship with other people.[15]" Social capital in one country is usually measured by the levels of social participation, trust, and solidarity; citizen engagement with social groups; the frequency of cooperation and collective action among the members of society; and how much information is shared among the public. Social capital is also measured on an individual level. It is proposed that we rationally choose to use online social networks to generate bridging or bonding social capital, which in turn satisfies our utilitarian and affective needs in life. It was suggested that social media, especially Facebook, can help individuals increase their bridging (benefits from strong ties) and bonding (benefits from weak ties) social capital as it can turn latent ties into close friends. Based on these, one may expect that higher social media engagement means a higher country level of social capital. The data showed that it is completely the opposite. The higher the social capital, the lower the levels of social media use we found.

Figure 12.14 Social Capital & GDP and Global Social Media Use



However, this finding may have several explanations. First of all, rich countries tend to have higher social capital and be individualistic. Individualistic countries do not use social networks as much as those in collectivistic countries, which tend to be poorer. Additionally, people in rich countries may participate in many face-to-face collaborative activities (volunteering, organizing civic events, etc.) that reduce their time for online social networking. Lastly, this study did not measure country-level social media engagement and social capital over several years; a longitudinal study may provide a better answer to the question of whether social networks increase our social capital or not.

Privacy

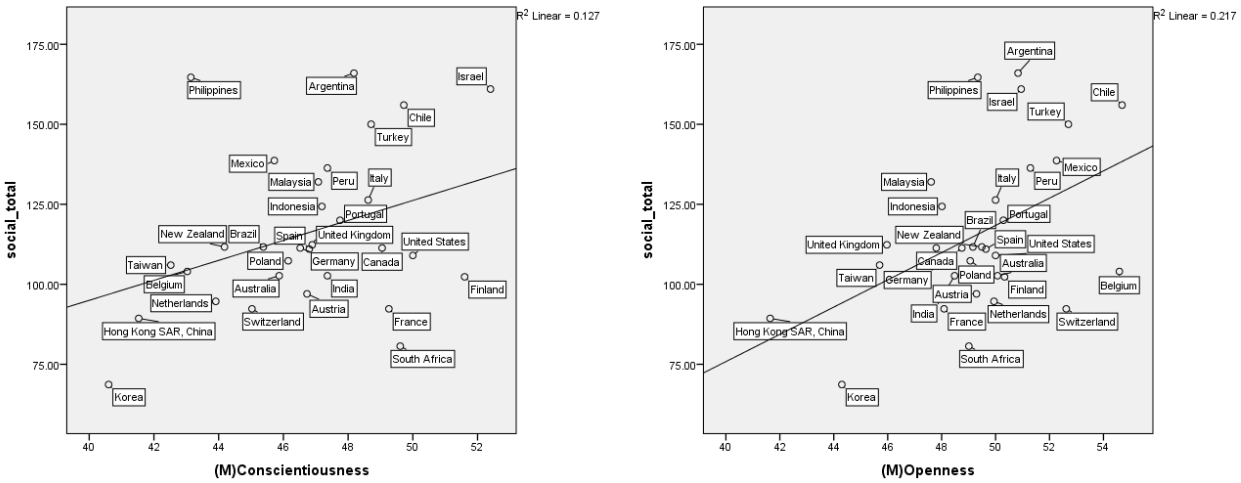
The first study ever published on Facebook was about privacy[16] and in the past eight years many other researchers have conducted other studies about the relationship between privacy and online social network usage. It was found that people from individualistic countries disclose more information and worry more about their privacy than those in collectivistic countries. Recently, two researchers argued that the concept of social media privacy was so loose in some countries that people shared some parts of their profiles as default or uploaded content to be able to communicate with others.[17] The researchers called for more research in this underexplored area by pointing out that in each society there are different cultural norms of privacy, different regulations about invasion of privacy, and different user attitudes about protecting online content.[10] We wanted to see if there is a relationship between country-level privacy protections and country-level social media engagement.

Privacy International[18] gives more than thirty countries a score based on several factors that include constitutional protection, identity cards, data-sharing, workplace monitoring, democratic safeguards, visual surveillance, and so on. A high privacy index score is good and indicates a low invasion of privacy. A low privacy score means there is a great deal of official or unofficial privacy invasion. By correlating the privacy index scores provided by Privacy International with the social media use index from Comscore, we found absolutely no relationship between high-surveillance and low-surveillance countries in terms of time spent online for social networking (see Appendixes).

Personality

It does not make much sense to measure personality on the country level, but past researchers conducted several surveys that used the Big Five personality-measurement scales in various countries and provided mean scores for each country. Since personality is a very good predictor of whether one uses social media heavily or not,[19] we wanted to see how country-level personality characteristics compare to country-level social networking score. We expected that social media penetration (the percentage of social network users) would positively correlate with extroversion and conscientiousness, while negatively correlating with neuroticism*. Interestingly, extroversion did not correlate well with online social media use indexes. This is an interesting finding because extroversion usually distinguishes users from nonusers and predicts usage intensity. However, conscientiousness (a trait related to being careful and working hard to finish tasks) was positively correlated with average time spent social networking. This finding is in line with past studies that found that conscientious individuals spend time online perfecting their social media profiles and carefully evaluating the activities of network members. At the same time, openness was also positively related with time spent for social media, as apparently nations that are open to new ideas and different experiences enjoy using social media. * Adam Acar, Philipp Rauschnabel, Carolyn Lin & Makoto Fukui. (2012). The relationship between personality and social media preferences. Proceedings of the 45th Annual Conference of Japan Association of Consumer Studies.

Figure 12.15 Conscientiousness and Global Social Media Use
Figure 12.16 Openness and Global Social Media Use

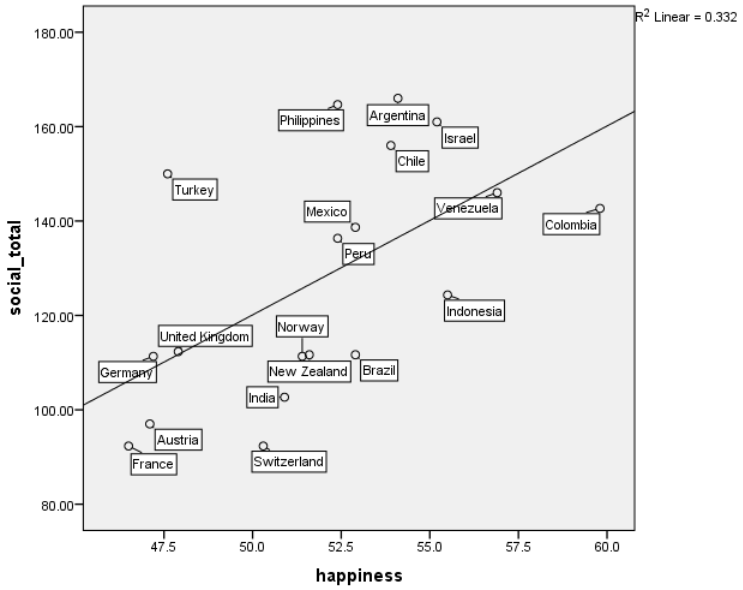


Subjective Well-being

When people use social media, they perhaps feel more connected and happier, although this may not apply to those who have social problems. Past research also showed that people not only gained emotional and social support by using Facebook but also reduced their loneliness. Can we really say social networking makes people happy, or do happy people simply do more social networking? In other words, is there any connection between social networking and happiness? To answer this question, we looked at the relationship between the Happy Planet Index and COMSCORE's social media use index. Since it is known that lonely people are more likely to commit suicide[20] and cultural norms have an impact on suicides,[21] we also added country-level suicide rates to the analysis.

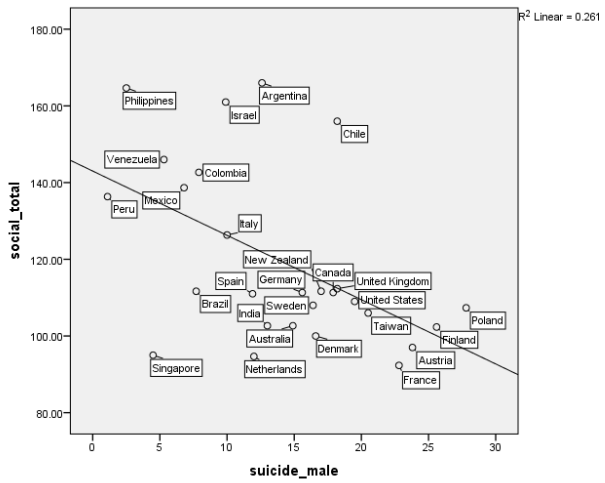
To our greatest surprise, there was a crystal-clear relationship between time people spend for online social networking and their country's score on the global happiness index. Of course, correlation does not mean causation so we cannot say social media makes people happy. We can, however, say there seems to be a connection between happiness and social media use at least on the country level. Most of the countries with high social media use intensity also scored high on the global happiness index except Turkey which had a relatively low happiness score.

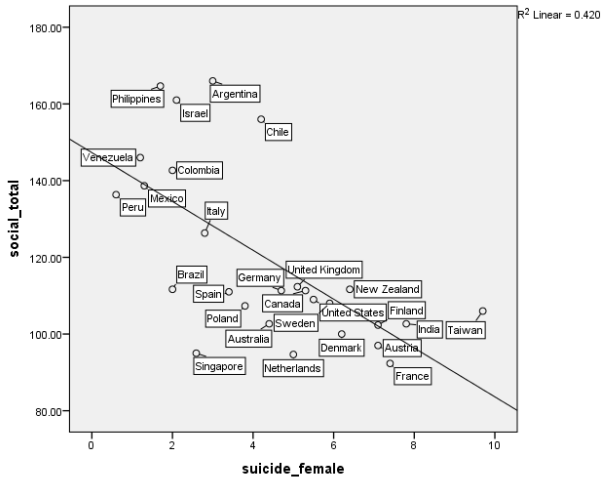
Figure 12.17 Happiness and Global Social Media Use



What is more, in countries where people had higher rates of time spent for social networking there were lower suicide rates, particularly for females. It is known that women are more susceptible to mood disorders and more frequently experience depression compared with men.[22] Additionally, male suicides are more likely to be related to substance abuse and childhood disorders, and female suicides to social disorders.[23] Since spending time in social media may create an illusion of togetherness, reduce loneliness, create opportunities to share problems with loved ones, and bring opportunities to be consoled by network members, we can conclude that in countries where people spend a great deal of time for online social networking less female suicides are likely to happen. However, readers should take this finding with a pinch of salt because, as we mentioned above, most of those countries with high social media use are relatively more religious and conservative where suicide is usually uncommon.

Figure 12.18 Male Suicide Rates and Global Social Media Use
Figure 12.19 Female Suicide Rates and Global Social Media Use

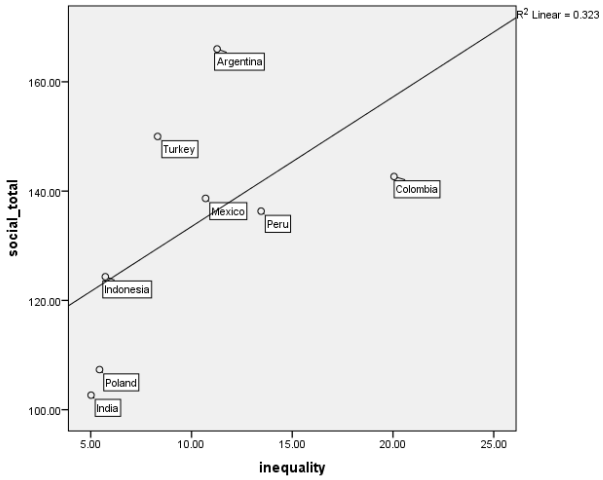


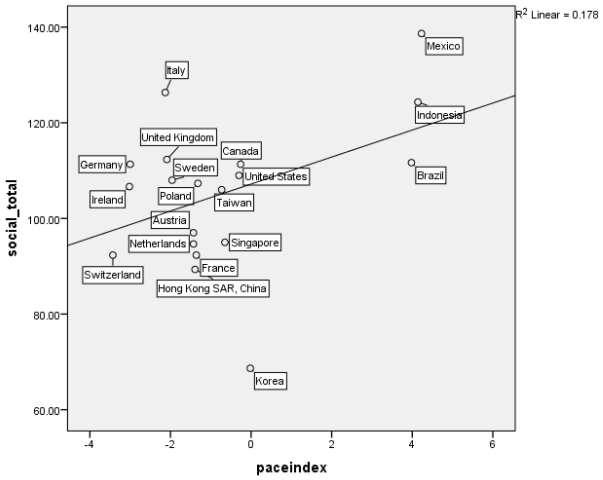


Pace of Life, Income Distribution and Corruption

Past studies suggested that income inequality and pace of life must be taken into account to understand global social media behavior. [2] As can be seen in the following graphs, pace of life (whether life is fast- or slow-paced, people walk fast or slowly on the street, people are punctual or not, etc.)[24] had a weak but positive relationship with social media use intensity. Income inequality, along with GDP, however, was strongly related to social media use. Similar to the Gini index, we calculated income inequality by dividing the income shared by the highest 20% with income shared by the lowest 20%. A higher ratio of rich to poor income share indicates a bigger gap between rich and poor. We can speculate that in slow paced countries like Brazil, Mexico and Indonesia, people put more emphasis on enjoying online or offline social interactions with their peers instead of trying so hard to gain material benefits. Note: A positive pace index score means routine activities take longer to complete.

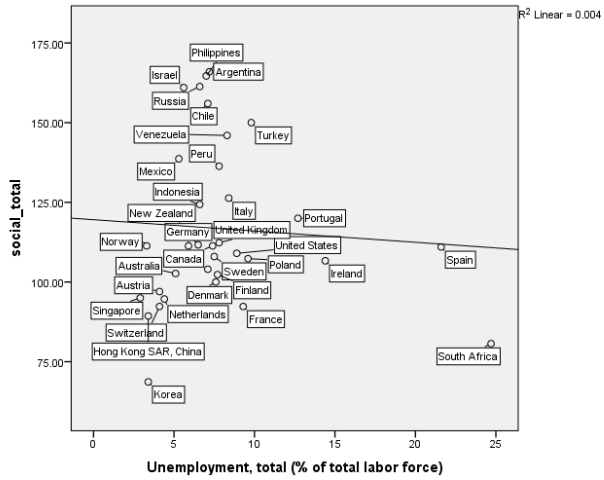
Figure 12.20 Income Inequality and Global Social Media Use
Figure 12.21 Pace of Life and Global Social Media Use

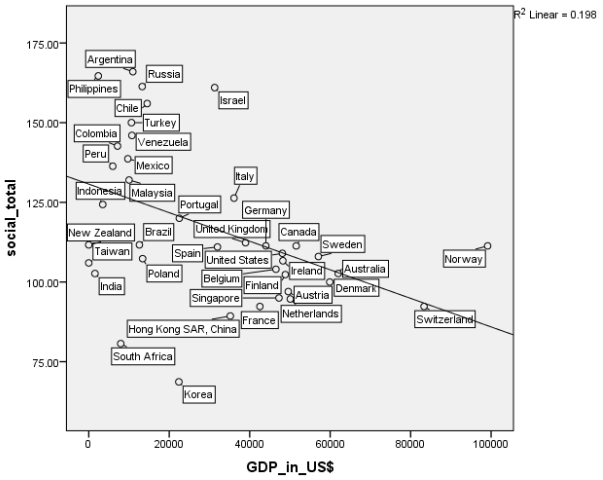




The data shows that people from countries where national income is unequally distributed spend more time for social media. On the contrary, the higher a country's GDP, the lower the time people spend for social networking. One may argue that people from rich countries have jobs and do not have much time using Facebook or Twitter but according to the data, unemployment had no significant impact on time spent for social networking. So, the most logical argument then could be that rich countries tend to be more individualistic and autonomous, thus use the Internet for individual purposes such as entertainment or information browsing. People from developing countries, however, tend to be more collectivistic and use social media to get emotional and social support. Apparently, as countries get richer, people spend less time on social networking.

Figure 12.22 Unemployment Rate and Global Social Media Use
Figure 12.23 National GDP and Global Social Media Use

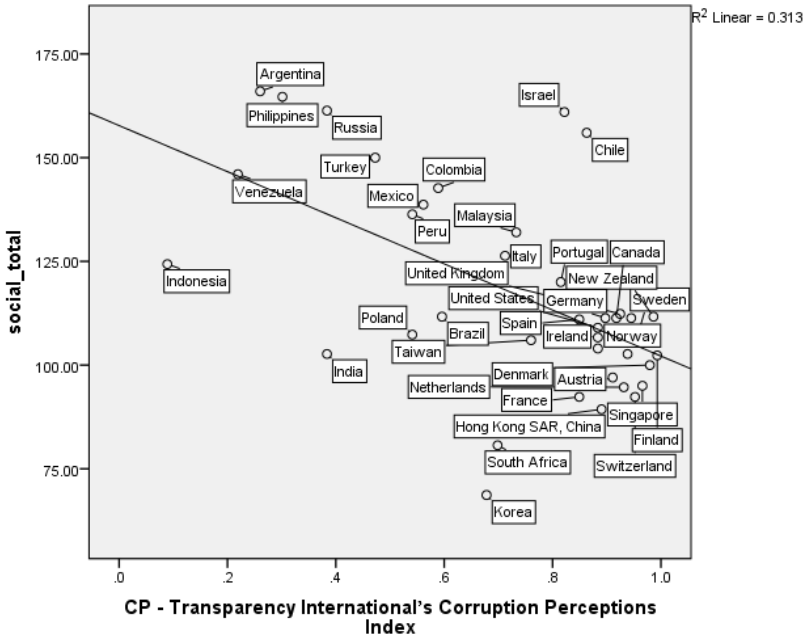




It was also obvious that social media use intensity had a positive relationship between country-level corruption. People may automatically think that this finding is not a surprise, as there is usually more corruption in countries with huge income inequality. However, there was no relationship between income inequality and corruption. This finding indicates that not all countries with income inequality are corrupt; the corrupt ones tend to be those who have high social media engagement and those that are more collective. We cannot

conclude that social networking gives people more opportunities to take advantage of the system or gain benefits without working hard, but it seems like people feel a need to use social media more if there is corruption.

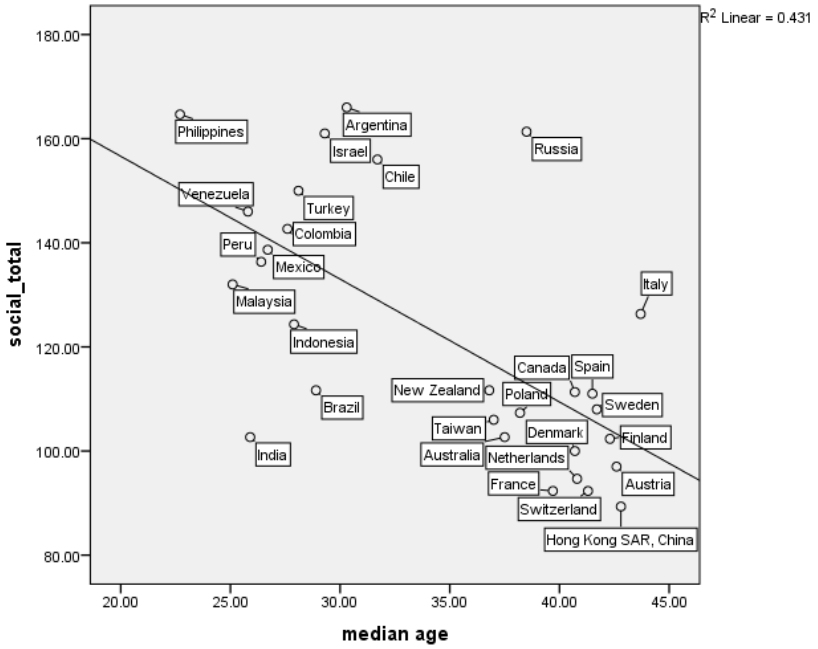
Figure 12.23 Corruption Perception Index and Global Social Media Use



Demographics

GDP growth but not population growth is related to social media use, as in general developing countries tend to have more room to grow their GDP. Population growth may not predict social media use because countries that have flexible immigration policies such as Canada, Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore have a growing population, but at the same time their median age is still higher than the average. Not surprisingly, median age (whether the country has a young population or not) correctly predicted country level social media use similar to past studies which found that young people use social media more frequently and spend more time for social networking. Russia, however, stood out as an outlier as it has a relatively older population who uses social media very actively.

Figure 12.24 Median Age and Global Social Media Use



On the other hand, the percentage of urban population and cultural diversity did not have any relationship with social media use. One may expect that countries with a higher percentage of urban population spend more time for social networking but this was not the case. Additionally, social network researchers commonly emphasize homophily (similar people tend to interact more); however, in our findings we observed that cultural diversity and ethnic fractionalization had neither a positive nor negative impact on social media use intensity (see appendixes). Large countries, which presumably have larger cultural diversity, use social media more because people can make different connections with people from different backgrounds and consume different online content. On the other hand, smaller countries, which presumably have more homogenous populations, may use social media frequently as well, to gain a feeling of solidarity. Obviously, we observed no difference because different types of countries use social media with high frequency for different compelling reasons.

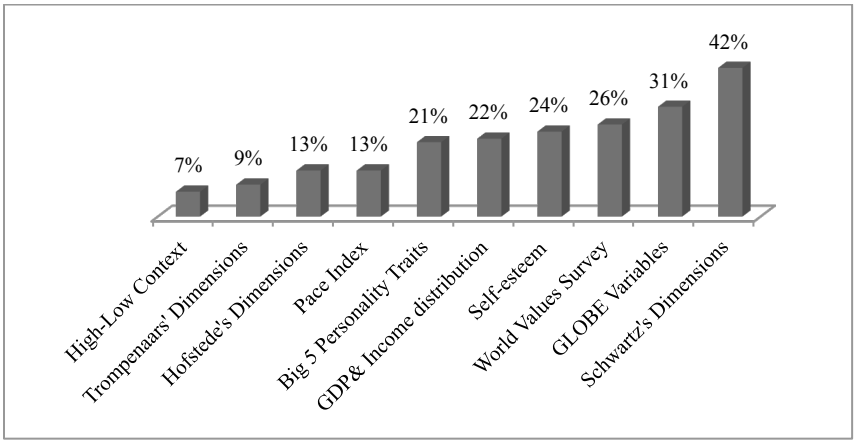
Summary

This dissertation was not written to develop a theory of cross-cultural social media behavior, but we were quite disappointed to see how some popular theories failed to explain this important phenomenon. When we ran linear regression analyses where social media use intensity ((% of social media users + proportion of social networking time + average time spent for social networking)/3) was predicted by different cultural values and personality traits, we observed that Schwartz's dimensions, the Globe study and the World Value Survey successfully explained more than 25% of the variation in social media behavior. On the other hand, Hall`s high-low context communication theory was totally ineffective. This was mostly because Hall groups East Asian nations –who don't want to bother others online, who don't want to show their emotions publicly and who relatively have low self-esteem– the same way as Arabs and Latin Americans who have relatively high self-esteem and who are emotionally expressive.

Similarly, Trompenaars' dimensions were not able to explain social media use intensity in different countries perhaps because of the business aspects of the dimensions. Although Hofstede's individualism and power distance dimensions had moderate levels of relationships with social media use, when the other two dimensions, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance, were added to the equation, the total explained variance was only about 13% , meaning 87% of cross-cultural social media behavior can be explained by other factors

rather than Hofstede's dimensions. Below you can see the total explained variance accounted for each set of values/traits.

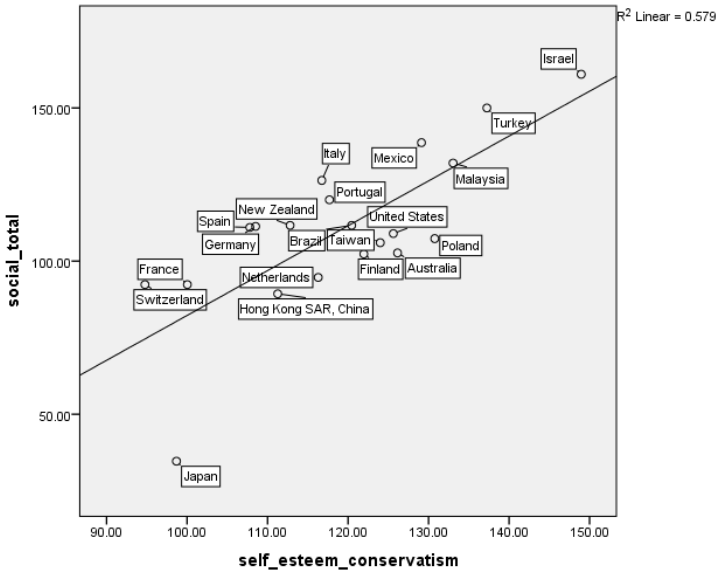
Figure 12.25 The Level of Variance in Global Social Media Use Explained by Each Variable



Inspired by this graph, we thought it is better for researchers to focus on the dimensions of Schwartz and the unique personal trait "self-esteem." Self-esteem can also be a good differentiator between collectivistic countries that use social media heavily (e.g. Argentina, Mexico, etc.) and East Asian countries that have the lowest usage rates (e.g. Japan, Korea, etc.). Since it is difficult to combine all five of Schwartz's dimensions, we focused on the one that had the highest positive relationship with social media: conservatism. According to Schwartz, conservatism is very similar to collectivism (group and other orientation) with some emphasis on traditions.

To confirm if conservatism (group orientation) and self-esteem (self-worth) can predict the nations' social media use, we created a new interaction variable (conservatism multiplied by self-esteem) and once again plotted the data. As can be seen below, there was a perfect relationship between self-esteem-conservatism and social media use.

Figure 12.26 Self-Esteem, Conservatism and Global Social Media Use



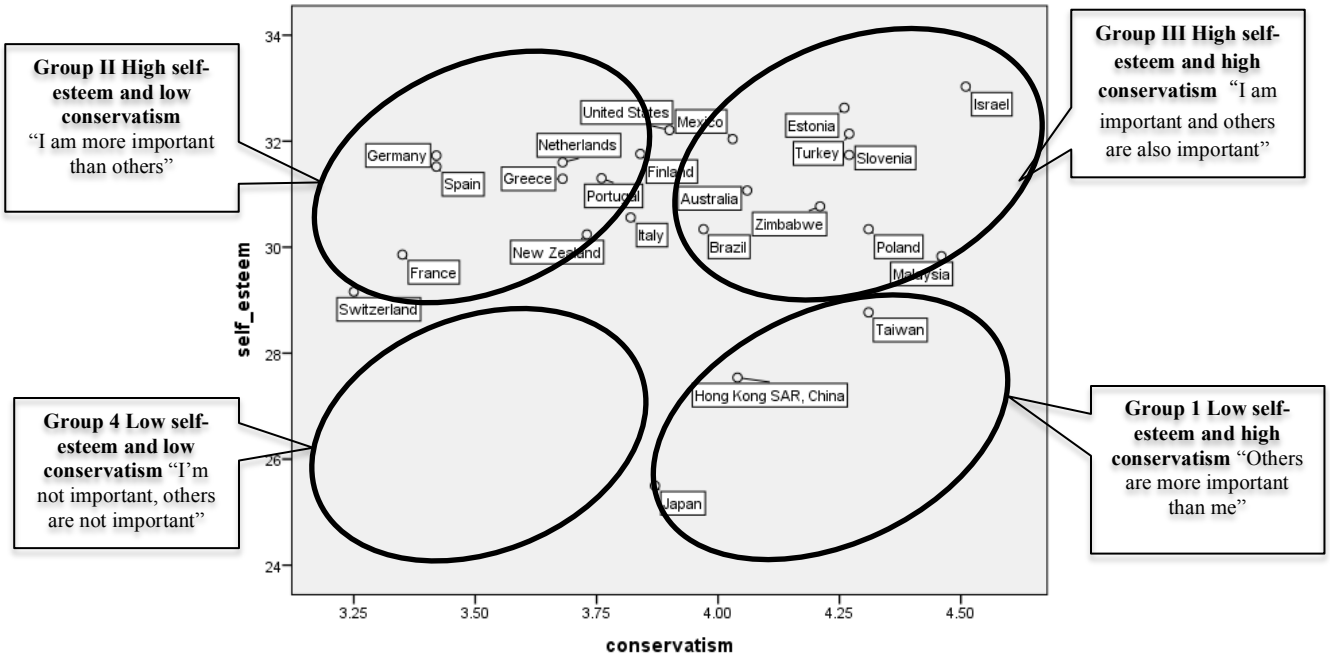
Despite the low sample size, and the exploratory nature of the study, we thus propose a new cross-cultural online communication framework called *Cross-cultural Self and Others' Worth* which divides the world into three regions based on the perception of one's own self value and the value of his/her social group. As explained in the table below, these three regions are a) East Asia countries that are influenced by Confucianism (Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, and Singapore), b) Western Countries (English speaking countries and most of Europe) and c) the rest of the world (particularly Latin America, the Middle East, Eastern Bloc Countries, South East Asia and Africa).

Table 12.2 Cross-cultural Self and Others' Worth Framework

Group I Low self-esteem and high conservatism	**Group II High self-esteem and low conservatism**	**Group III Low self-esteem and high conservatism**
• Not confident about his/her own content • Careful about not bothering others online • Thinks that others may not care about him/her • Not comfortable expressing personal opinions publicly • Suppresses his/her (positive or negative) emotions • Does not care much about being popular online	• Confident about own content • Concerned about self-image • Emotionally expressive • Comfortable expressing personal opinions publicly • Would like to be popular online • Not so much interested about sharing community/group related messages • Not so concerned/curious about what everybody is up to	• Confident about own content • Concerned about self-image • Emotionally expressive • Comfortable expressing personal opinions publicly • Would like to be popular online • Interested in sharing community/group related messages • Concerned/curious about what everybody is up to
Example: Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan and Singapore.	Example: Germany, France, Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Spain, etc.	Example: Turkey, Egypt, Israel, Mexico, Argentina, Malaysia, Indonesia, Poland, etc.

The graph below illustrates how each country compares to the rest of the world in terms of nation-level self-esteem and conservatism (collectivism) scores. Remember, past studies measured only a small fraction of the countries' self-esteem and conservatism scores, so, we had to expand the findings from this study to broader regions based on the literature review.

Figure 12. 27 Self-Esteem and Conservatism



CHAPTER XIII

Eastern & Western Communication Styles
(Japanese & American Communication Styles)

Although currently there are more than six thousand cultures in the world,[1] several historians and anthropologists believed that cultures can be classified into just a few groups. Toynbee,[2] a British historian, identified twenty-three different cultural segments in his attempt to write a world history. He indicated that in the twentieth century there had been actually four major cultural groups: Islamic, Hindu, Far Eastern (Chinese-Japanese-Korean), and Western (European and North American, Orthodox-Russian, and Orthodox Byzantine). The anthropologist Northrop[3] further reduced these groups into Eastern civilizations/Western civilizations. Though he also talked about art- and passion-driven Spanish and Latin American cultures, his book's main premise is that there are two distinctly different cultures in the world—aesthetic- and intuition-based Eastern cultures (China and cultures influenced by Confucianism and Taoism) and logic-, theory-, and abstraction-based Western cultures. Richard Nisbett[4] adopted these views and conducted several experiments where Chinese, Japanese, and Korean subjects were compared with Western subjects, usually Americans. The results confirmed that Easterners and Westerners think differently; most Eastern subjects follow inductive logic and Western subjects follow deductive logic. Nisbett also indicated that Easterners and Westerners communicate differently, because Westerners teach their kids during early childhood how to be independent and take an "agentic" approach, while kids who grow up in Eastern cultures practice how to be a "receiver" and pay attention to others' needs and contextual cues. This chapter focuses on Japanese culture, as an exemplar of Eastern culture and compares and contrasts it with a typical Western culture: American culture.

Ruth Benedict, an American anthropologist, was one of the earliest to write about Japanese culture. In her 1946 book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*,[5] she argued that the biggest underlying core value in Japan was shame, or the fear of public embarrassment. While in the United States people have their own moral standards and judge themselves based on those convictions, in Japan, shame is determined by the reactions of others. Benedict argued that Japanese rely on external evaluations for self-respect, whereas Americans' behavior is driven by personal conviction of sin. Besides shame, another notable concept that defines Japanese culture is amae, or dependence on others. Takeo Doi, who was a psychoanalyst at the University of Tokyo, argued that in the Western world, children are not tolerated when they make a mistake or when they have weaknesses that they can improve. In Japan, however, children know that they can rely on their parents any time. This notion is also common among Japanese adults as businessmen in Japan have amae when conducting business, meaning they believe they can rely on the other party and they can get 100% support and assistance from the other side in any situation.

In 1994, American communications professor William Gudykunst and his Japanese counterpart Tsukasa Nishida together wrote a book[7] to explain American and Japanese ways of communication. As a foundation for their research, the authors argued that people constantly interpret messages they receive, but the interpretation process, mostly based on one's culture and individual experiences, is what causes miscommunication. Although some scholars[8] may be against cultural determinism, arguing that there may be many other variables influencing how people communicate, Gudykunst posits that the uniqueness of Japanese communication can be mostly explained by the culture that has certain patterns such in-group/out-group boundaries, attitudes toward strangers, collectivistic values, and contextual awareness.

Gudykunst and Nishida[7] classified cross-cultural differences between Japan and the United States into two categories: language use and communication patterns. In terms of language use, the authors referred to the differences between the Eastern, synthetic way thinking versus the Western, analytical way of thinking that shaped the English and Japanese languages. Japanese is indirect and predicate-centered; English is direct and actor-centered. These differences also shape how people from these two nations manage topics and turn-taking

in a conversation, persuade others, utilize silence in conversation, and interact with strangers. The following table summarizes the authors' arguments on language use in Japan and the United States:

Table 13.1 The Differences in Language Use. Source: Gudykunst & Nishida (1994)

	Outcomes of using Japanese in a conversation	**Outcomes of using English in a conversation**
In-group/Out-group Interactions	Honorifics and different words used for outsiders. *Honne* (sincere) statements for close friends vs. *tatemae* (formal) statements in social situations	No distinctive comm. between out-group members. Hiding true feelings in order to not to hurt others is rare. Similar language is used for both acquaintances and strangers.
Purpose of communication	Information transmission (persuasiveness should always be avoided)	Persuasion (language can be used to convince others; threats are not unusual)
Topic Management and Turn-taking	Take turns evenly, use back-channeling frequently	Conversation starter makes most of the talk, a lot of questions and comments and less back-channeling
Silence	Presence of seniors, outsiders, and persons of the opposite gender make it hard to talk in a group; silence has various meanings	Words are used to control any situation; silence is not liked
Uncertainty Reduction	Focus on nonverbal behavior, group membership, and background information	Focus on verbal communication and individual ideas and opinions
Self-disclosure	Low self-disclosure, might not reveal the truth (honne/tatemae)	High disclosure, ask more questions (not age and marital status)
Self-Conception	Interdependent (e.g. *we*, *I belong to*… statements)	Independent (e.g. *me*, *I am* … statements)
In-group/Out-group Boundary	Strict (company, school, circle, family members are treated very differently)	Loose (comm. with strangers does not have distinctive patterns)
***Enryo* (Conformity)**	High (self-deprecating statements are encouraged; harmony requires conformity)	Low (independence is a virtue)

When it comes to communication patterns, Gudykunst and Nishida talked about differing predispositions toward verbal and nonverbal communication in both countries, in addition to varying levels of privacy perceptions, conflict negotiations, and intimacy in social relationships. The Japanese put more weight on nonverbal communication than do Americans, not only when communicating with friends and family but also during initial interactions with strangers. At the same time, Japanese express their emotions less intensely and tend not to show negative emotions. As a result, the Japanese communication style tends to be relaxed, slow-paced, and less verbal. The following table summarizes Japanese and American communication styles:

Table 13.2 The Differences in Communication Style. Source: Gudykunst & Nishida (1994)

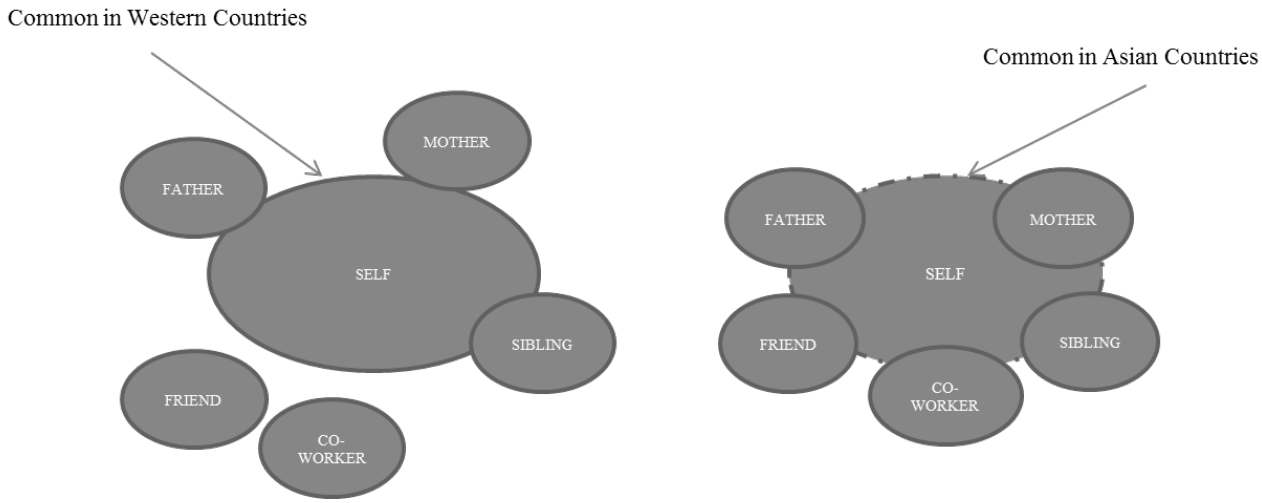
	Japanese Communication Style	**American Communication Style**
Nonverbal Aspects	Positive emotions displayed more often	Negative emotions (distress, anger) displayed more often; more eye contact and touching
Relationship Development	*Amae* and *sasshi* are important in all stages, coworker and classmate relationships are more intimate than family relationships.	No *amae* and *sasshi* in advanced relationships, coworker relationships are not necessarily seen intimate.
Privacy	Use passive-withdrawal when privacy is	Use active-aggressive strategies when

	threatened	privacy is threatened
Presence	Relaxed, passive criticism, expression of own limitations when admiring someone, no explanations after an apology	Attentive, active criticism, direct admiration, explain own behavior after an apology
Predispositions toward Verbal Behavior	Less assertive, talking a lot is looked down upon, *awase* worldview	More assertive, talk longer, *erabi* worldview
Emotional Expression	No actions needed to deal with emotional feeling	Emotions are experienced for longer time and with higher intensity, explicitly stated
Face Negotiation and Conflict Resolution	Losing face when disappointing group members; avoidance used to resolve conflict	Losing face when personally failing in an individual activity; dominating and integrating negotiations
Ideal Communication Partner	A person who is not direct, not dominant in conversation, and tolerant of silence	A person who is expressive and has a sense of humor but not self-conscious
***Wa* (Harmony)**	Omnipresent	Not so important

Self-Construal in Japan & the United States

Perception of self or self-construal is known as the "constellation of thoughts, feelings, and actions concerning one's relationship to others, and the self as distinct from others."[9] Markus and Kitayama, who conducted a series of studies regarding the Japanese self, suggest that cultural values and individual socialization processes strongly impact how individuals relate to their societies. They suggest that Americans have an *independent self* that promotes individualism and uniqueness, while the Japanese have an *interdependent self* that necessitates fitting in and satisfying others' needs. As the authors state, "The American examples stress attending to the self, the appreciation of one's difference from others, and the importance of asserting the self. The Japanese examples emphasize attending to and fitting in with others and the importance of harmonious interdependence with them."[10 (page 224).] In a separate study, the same researchers found that Japanese people are more likely to make self-deprecating statements, frequently engage with self-criticism, and are influenced more by their failures than their accomplishments compared to Americans.[11]

Figure 13.1 Self-Construal in Japan & the United States. *Source: Markus & Kitayama (1991, page 226)*



Beside the independent and the interdependent self, Dean Barnlund, another American researcher, introduced the concepts of *public self* and *private self* in Japan.[12] He contended that Japan is a homogenous society and in order to preserve harmony, Japanese do not reveal much information about themselves. Even among close

friends, it is rare that people share private information, because overall Japanese people have a negative view of disclosing the private self. Although in the United States people also sometimes hide their true personalities or intentions, according to Barnlund the biggest difference is that in Japan the public self is narrow-ranged, meaning what is known about a person tells very little about him or her. What is more, the private self is usually shared nonverbally, meaning people have to intuit the inner world of those they converse with. That is very difficult unless both parties have an intimate relationship.

Self-disclosure in Japan & the United States

Self-disclosure refers to "the quantity (breadth) and quality (depth) of personal information that an individual provides to another."[13] Human relationships usually develop based on information disclosure; the more information is shared, the more intimacy there tends to be.[14] The process of self-disclosure tends to be reciprocal (if A discloses two pieces information, B is expected to disclose two pieces of information), and a rewarding experience because self-disclosure increases trust and liking.[14] Although in Western cultures self-disclosure is seen as a trust-building and rewarding activity, Gudykunst and Nishida[7] argued that Japanese people see self-disclosure differently. They suggested that the Japanese, as group-oriented people, are relatively shy and feel uncomfortable sharing information with strangers (out-group members). Americans, as individual-oriented people, feel more comfortable exchanging information with strangers because this helps them reduce uncertainty and pave the way for mutual trust.[7] Barnlund[12] also observes that Japanese people communicate with strangers less frequently and even if they do, they self-disclose very little.

There seem to be several reasons why Japanese self-disclose less than Americans overall. By definition, self-disclosure is a verbal activity, and, as mentioned before, the Japanese put less emphasis on verbal compared to nonverbal communication, which may limit the amount of information that can possibly be disclosed. Additionally, self-disclosure builds intimacy between involved parties but to many Japanese, intimacy means understanding and bonding whereas it mostly means physical contact for Americans. In other words, in Japan people get intimate over time and by developing a sense of togetherness; in the United States, on the other hand, people build and maintain intimacy by verbal statements such as compliments, concerns, and encouragements.[15] Furthermore, Barnlund[12] suggested that self-disclosure is strongly related to self-knowledge and in general Americans have more self-knowledge than do the Japanese. Therefore Americans can self-disclose more, especially during initial interactions. Lastly, a recent study that analyzed online information disclosure through computer-mediated communication found that another reason the Japanese do not self-disclose as much as Americans is their fear of negative appraisal or evaluation by peers.[16]

Context-based Communication in Japan & the United States

In his seminal book *Understanding Cultural Differences*, Edward Hall defines context as "the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event. The elements that combine to produce a given meaning – events and context – are in different proportions depending on the culture. The cultures of the world can be compared on a scale from high to low context."[17 (page 6)] According to Edward Hall, Japan and the Arab countries are at the highest end of the communication context continuum compared to North America, Scandinavia, and the German-speaking countries, which fall at the lower end. It is postulated[9] that most Japanese communication is indirect, non-verbal, and predominantly high-context, as there are even words to indicate how people understand each other without using words: *ishin denshin* (mental telepathy), *kuukiwo yomu* (picking up on cues based on the atmosphere) and *honne* and *tatemae* (sincere versus insincere but socially expected statements). The following excerpt from a book on why some Japanese women choose to marry foreigners explains how common indirect communication in Japan is:

> *There is an unspoken belief among Japanese in general that putting deep feelings into words somehow lowers or spoils their value and that understanding attained without words is more precious than that understanding attained through precise articulation. Interpersonal communication is based on a great deal of guessing and reading between the lines. In a culture where directness can seem ugly and repulsive, being able to guess the feelings of another and correctly grasp what she or he wishes to say without verbal expression is considered a sign of closeness between two persons.*[18 (page 98)]

Although some people may think context solely means the immediate environment, when a conversation is taking place it mostly refers to shared background;[17] it was found[9] that Japanese people pay far more attention to someone's background (company name, university name) than do Americans. To sum up, high-context communication is associated with a preference for relationship maintenance over task completion, visual information over textual information, silence over verbosity, and indirect statements over direct ones, and the Japanese tend to meet all these criteria.[9] The following table adapted from a study comparing Finland, India, and Japan[19] illustrates the level of high-context communication in Japan:

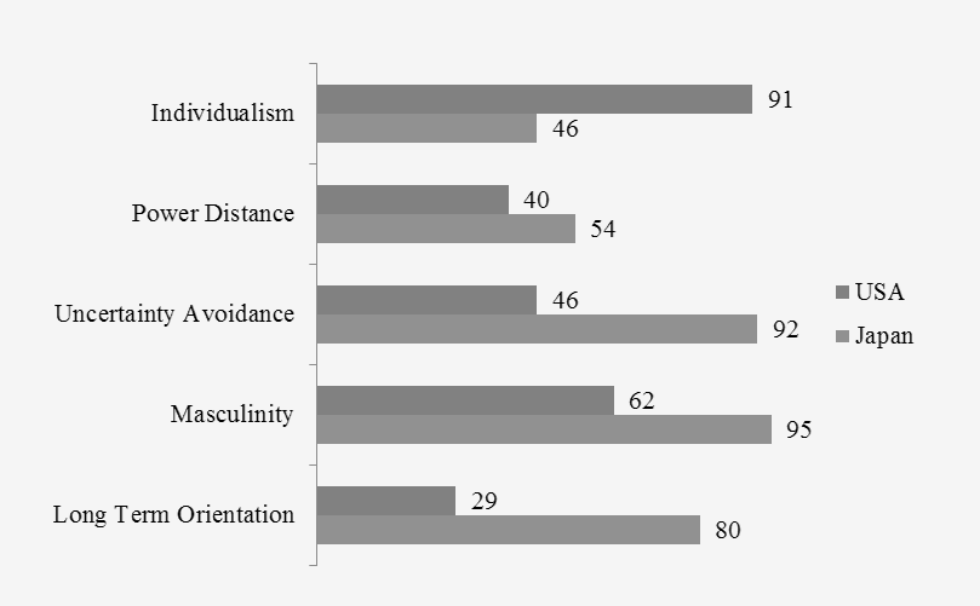
Table 13.3 Japanese Communication Style. Source: Nishimura et al. (2008)

Communication Style	Introvert	Cultural features	A lot of power of traditions
	Modest		High commitment to complete action chains
	Quiet		Reactive
	Doesn't interrupt		Listening culture
	Uses silence		Data-orientation
	Thinks in silence		High situational relevance
	Dislikes big talkers		Relatively homogeneous
	Little body language		Punctual

Japan & the United States According to Hofstede

Hofstede's country index scores make it clear that Americans are more individualistic than the Japanese, and at the same time that Japan is a more masculine and uncertainty-avoidant country. It is easy to understand that the Japanese are more allocentric (group-oriented) and Americans more idiocentric (self-oriented), since Japanese culture is heavily influenced by Confucianism, which promotes loyalty to one's group and family and conflict avoidance.[20] Readers should note that Japan is not as collectivistic as China and Korea because historically in Japan the father leaves everything to the eldest son, not the whole family.[21] High masculinity in Japan is mostly attributed to clear gender roles in Asia, whereas there is more equality among men and women in the United States. It also appears that the ways Japanese men perceive women and romantic relationships are also influenced by high masculinity; one study found that Japanese did not find opposite gender relationship terms (e.g. *fiancé*, *spouse*, *mate*, etc.) as intimate as Americans.[22] Lastly, Hofstede considers the Japanese to be more uncertainty-avoidant, as Japanese strictly avoid taking risks and feel uncomfortable being in an ambiguous situation.[23]

Figure 13.2 The Index Scores of Japan and the USA. Source:geert-hofstede.com



Two distinct examples of the level of uncertainty avoidance were provided by the scholars from the pragmatics discipline. The first study [24] qualitatively analyzed cooking recipes in Japanese and English. The results showed that Japanese recipes tended to include numbers for each step, color-coding for each category and a different illustration for each activity. Everything was far clearer and elaborated in the Japanese sample that was explained by the author with the history of rice farming in Japan that required very strict regulations and clear instructions because of limited land. The second study [25] looked at the language used in manuals printed for British and Japanese users. The findings were similar as Japanese manuals included a higher number of graphics which was explained by the authors with the pictographic nature of the Japanese alphabet. The study, however, also found that there were more detailed warnings and a lot of advice, a reflection of high uncertainty avoidance in Japan.

Relational Mobility in Japan & the United States

Relational mobility, defined as "the general degree to which individuals in the society have the opportunities to form new and terminate old relationships,"[26] is an important factor that influences how people communicate and how much information they disclose to friends. In some cultures, there are many opportunities to develop new relationships and in general relationships develop rapidly or last very long because of high social mobility (high frequency of changing careers, changing social roles, changing location, etc.) in society. It is expected that in high social-mobility societies (such as the United States), people self-disclose more information in a short time in order to establish relationships that may quickly end, whereas in low relational-mobility societies (such as Japan) people take time to disclose information because they may fear rejection in an environment where there are few opportunities to establish new friendships.[26] Additionally, people in low relational-mobility societies also may not need to self-disclose much: they are likely to already know a great deal about each other as they share the same context. On the other hand, while one may expect low-social mobility societies to be more concerned about online privacy, research shows that high-social mobility societies are more worried about privacy in social media as they disclose more.[27] The following table, provided by several researchers from Hokkaido University, summarizes the differences between high and low relational-mobility societies.[26, 27, 28]

Table 13.4 High-Low Relational Mobility Societies

Low Relational Mobility	**High Relational Mobility**
Establishing friendships takes time	Friendships established easily and quickly
Friendships last long	Friendships don't last long
Gradual self-disclosure	Early self-disclosure
Self-disclosure is risky	Self-disclosure increases liking/makes relationships stable
High commitment relationships	Low commitment relationships
Smaller social circles	Larger friend circles
Believes relationships are stable	Believes self-disclosure needed for relationship maintenance
Difficult to get away from current relationships	Easy to leave current relationships
Discloses info less on Facebook/ less worried about Facebook privacy	Discloses more info on Facebook/worried about privacy on Facebook
Example: Japan	Example: USA

CHAPTER XIV

Social Media in Japan

The history of modern social networks in Japan goes back to 2004,[1] when the online profile-based social networking site Mixi was established. It quickly gained traction to become the leading social network destination in Japan, with more than 17 million monthly users.[1] However, Mixi is not as popular as it used to be and there are now more Twitter users than Mixi users.[2] As early as December 2011, an online research company[3] claimed that Facebook had a higher number of monthly unique visitors than did Mixi. Nowadays, all of these major services seem to have been surpassed by LINE, a group chatting application that can be considered a social media platform (it has a newsfeed, timeline, and many-to-many communication functions). Recently, LINE reported that it registered about 47 million users in Japan,[4] almost equivalent to Japanese Facebook and Twitter users combined.

Past studies indicated that Japanese users prefer local social networks that reflect Japanese social values.[5,6] Japanese online social networks, in general, consist of smaller and tightly knit social circles and promote anonymity, long-term commitment, and indirect communication, which are all part of Japanese culture.[7] Mixi users, for example, are usually considered introspective and conservative when presenting themselves on the network.[1] These findings imply that Japanese social media behavior is quite different when compared with Western users.

Table 13.1 Past Studies Comparing & Contrasting Mixi & Western Social Networks

Mixi	Facebook and/or Myspace
• **Users tend to be conservative and introspective; users try not to offend friends by writing something different, preserving the feeling of "sameness"** • **Only 20% use their real names** • **84% used the diary function** • **Only 21% posted a real profile picture** • **Average of 70-80 friends** • **57% restrict access to include only close friends** • **Main user motive is social identity gratification** **(Barker & Ota, 2011)**	• Users tend to be bold, assertive, open • Most of the users (87%) used real names • Only 4% used the platform to write a diary • 77% posted a real profile picture • Average of 100–150 friends • Only 37% restrict access to include only close friends • Main user motives are communicating with close friends, social compensation, entertainment, and passing time
• **Platform is not designed to make friends; getting to know others takes time** • **Interface is subtle and indirect** **(Fogg & Izawa, 2008)**	• Quick and direct forms of communication; communication messages require direct action (poking, chatting) • Interface is assertive and mechanistic
• **Users consider it to be safer** **(Acar, 2012)**	• Users report security problems and spam
• **About "me with them"** **(Takahashi, 2010)**	• About "me and them"
• **Only 11% showed their real name and real profile picture** · **Lower self-disclosure, homogeneous contacts, smaller number of contacts, high-commitment relationships, reflecting**	• A higher percentage of American users showed their real name and real profile picture • Higher self-disclosure, heterogeneous contacts, higher number of contacts,

the low level of social mobility in Japan (Thomson & Ito, 2012)	low-commitment relationships
• **Asked for more advice and information on Mixi brand communities** • **Offered more advice and information on Mixi brand communities** • **(Dou, 2011. http://www.prsa.org/Intelligence/PRJournal/Documents/2011Dou.pdf)**	• Asked for less advice and information on Facebook brand communities • Offered less advice and information on Facebook brand communities • Showed more positive feelings or support for brands

Nevertheless, some people may argue that online social network usage in Japan has been changing with the rising popularity of real name–based social networking platforms[11] and the impact of globalization,[8] which is accelerated by social media. Yet our recent studies provided empirical evidence that Japanese social networking behavior still differs from that of Western countries. We found that more than 80% of Japanese social media users are reluctant to use their real name and real pictures in social media and the ratio of people who prefer anonymity today is not significantly different from the past.[12] In another study in which we compared the tweets of American and Japanese college students, we observed that the content of social-media messages in Japan also tend to be quite different, as Japanese college students usually tweet about TV dramas and rarely ask for help while American college students tend to post messages related to sports and ask many questions publicly.[13] By the same token, while conducting a qualitative study that compared Japanese and American students' Facebook use, we were surprised to find that Japanese students responded to every single comment on Facebook, preferred smartphones over computers for social networking, and felt more positive about social media use in the classroom than did American subjects.[14] Similarly, when it comes to commercial social media usage, Japanese companies tweet less frequently than their foreign counterparts, use hashtags less often, and usually do not allow their fans to post on their brands' Facebook walls.[15] All these findings confirm that Japanese social media use is still quite different from that of Westerners.

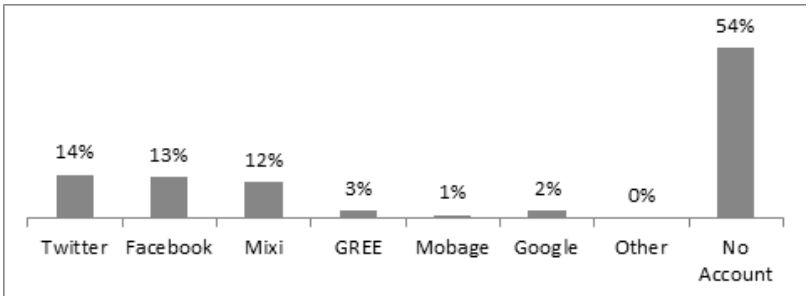
Ruth Benedict claimed that Westerners have a hard time understanding Japanese culture because Japan is a country of contrasts.[16] This applies to social media as well. For instance, Japan constantly scores at the bottom of global social media engagement indexes,[3,17] yet Japan has the highest blog readership in the world.[18] Japanese tend to be very other-oriented, but Japan is the only country where Twitter, which promotes self-broadcasting, is more popular than Facebook[19] or Mixi. Japan is known to be a tech-friendly country, but it consistently lagged behind Western countries in computer adoption.[20] Of course, many of these can also be explained by Japan's demographics: Japan has one of the most aged populations in the world (25% of the population is 65 or older).[CIA World Fact Book/Japan] Regardless, it seems Japan has highly unique social media use patterns.

Japanese Social Media Users

In March 2012, we conducted a large-scale study by using the online panel of Kansai Electric Power Company. With the participation of 1,000 online Japanese users from different age groups, our study generated quite useful insights about social media use in Japan. Very similar to what the Pew Research Center found,[22] we observed that about half (54%) of the Japanese Internet users did not have any social media account.[12] When asked a single-choice question about which social media site they preferred, 14% indicated Twitter, followed by 13% for Facebook, and 12% for Mixi. Around the same time, a Japanese market research company asked more than 10,000 online users which social media platforms they signed up for; it also found that Twitter was the most popular platform in Japan, with 29% of Internet users mentioning that they had a Twitter account.[23] In the nationwide study we conducted,[22] we wanted to know what distinguished social media users from non-users and why people use social media. Our initial analysis showed that females and young Internet users were more likely to be users. When it comes to personality, there was only one trait that differentiated users from non-users: extroversion. Obviously Japanese people who were social and extroverted were more likely to be involved with social media.[24]

Although extroverts used social media more, we were very surprised to discover a unique top activity in social media, as it was not related to a social activity per se. In order to find out what people did on social media, we gave respondents twenty-four online activities and asked them to indicate whether they performed each activity on their preferred social media platform (Mixi, Twitter, GREE, Facebook, Google+, etc.). We observed that neither social bonding nor information gathering activities topped the list. It was killing time, followed by enjoyment: both individual and escapism-related activities.[24] We believe long train commutes in Japan and the traditional manga culture that promotes escape from reality play a role in this behavioral outcome. On the other hand, finding a partner, joining discussions, and using social media for work or job hunting were the least common activities performed by Japanese social media users. As part of a modest and reserved society, the Japanese may abstain from joining public discussions on the Internet. One should also note that career-oriented platforms like LinkedIn, human resources applications, and dating networks may have a hard time penetrating the market in Japan, as Japanese people use social media mostly for different purposes.

Figure 13.1 Social Media Users in Japan by March 2012. Source: Acar & Fukui (2012)



Facebook Use in Japan

One particular aspect of Japanese Internet users is their low engagement rates in content creation. In the study we conducted in March 2012,[22] we asked respondents to indicate what they have done on Facebook in the past two months. As one can guess, a small fraction of users mentioned updating their status in social media. Comparing these values with American users (in the left column), one can see that American users are more active:

Table 13.2 Comparison of American and Japanese Social Media Users

35.4% Updated Facebook status in the past two months	**50%** Updated Facebook status in the past month [25]
29.7 % Posted photos or videos in the past two months	NA
21% Posted on Facebook about a favorite brand in the past two months	NA
37.6% Participated in a promotional Facebook campaign in the past two months	NA
NA	**55%** Commented on friends' content in the past month[25]

Note: *N*=229 Japanese Facebook users, nationwide sample (Acar & Fukui, 2012); *N*=269 American Facebook users, nationwide sample (PEW, 2012)

Alternatively, the results indicate that Japanese users can be quite active when it comes to participating in promotional campaigns, as the percentage who joined a commercial campaign on Facebook is larger than those who updated their status. Supporting this finding, a market research company found that more than half of Japanese college students wanted to follow their favorite brands on multiple platforms (e.g., following Coke on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Pinterest versus just following it on a single platform), while this ratio was less than one-third among the American sample.[26] Furthermore, when we compared German, American, and Japanese Facebook fans' reactions to brands' posts, we found that Japanese were ten times more likely to Like

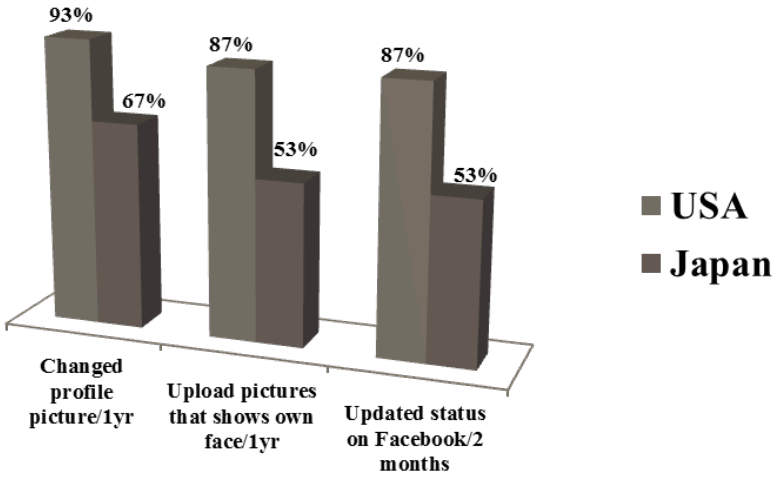
a brand post on Facebook but at the same time about ten times less likely to share and five times less likely to comment on those posts compared to American consumers.[27] In other words, if Coke had an equal number of fans in Japan and the United States (let's say one million), when it posts a message, it is likely to get about 16,000 Likes in Japan versus 1,600 Likes in the United States. However, total comments and shares may be the same in each country because American users are more likely to share and comment on branded posts. We think because Japanese are very considerate of others, sharing a message with friends who may not be fans of another brand may be seen as very rude in Japan. Additionally, publicly commenting on brands' posts may make Japanese feel different from others, and in a harmony-based society people may not want to publicize their brand choices. See the following table.

Table 13.3 Consumer Reactions to Facebook Posts in Japan, Germany and the USA (Source: Acar, 2013)

Country	*Likes divided by the total Fan count*	*Shares divided by Likes*	*Comments divided by Likes*
Japan	1.6%	1.9%	2.3%
America	0.2%	16.0%	10.0%
Germany	0.3%	6.6%	23.7%
Sample	105 (The last post of 35 brands in Japan, USA and Germany)	1050 (The last 10 posts of 35 brands in Japan, Germany and the US)	1050 (The last 10 posts of 35 brands in Japan, Germany and the US)
Statistical Significance	Significant f (91,2)=15.87, p<.05)	Significant f (1016,2)=16.33, p<.05)	Significant f (1016,2)=8.67, p<.05)

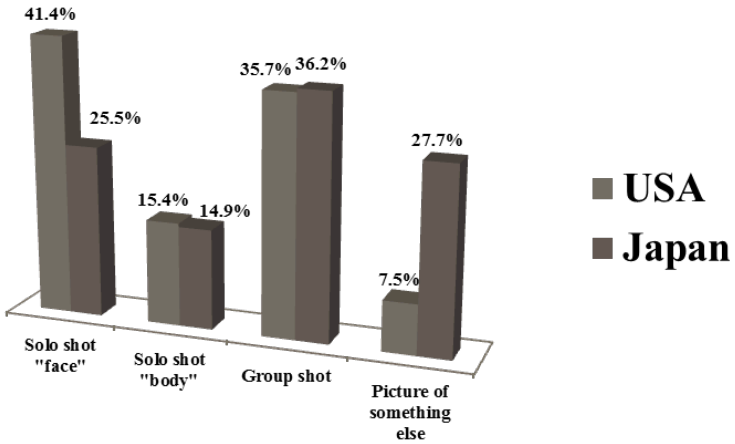
As behavior on Facebook may strongly depend on demographic characteristics, we also compared the same gender and the same occupation (student) subjects from Japan and the United States. The American sample consisted of 229 female members of a college-student online panel operated by a private market research company, whereas the Japanese sample included 31 female college students from a Japanese public university. The results were very similar to the previous findings, showing far more active American subjects as indicated by the graph below. Particularly, the percentages of students who updated their status and posted a photo showing their face were far lower in the Japanese sample. We also asked the students their friend count on Facebook and the results showed that U.S. female students had on average 475 friends, much higher than the average friend count of 148 in Japan. Although the difference in the friend count was also statistically significant, because there was too much variation in the data we thought comparing only the average number of friends may not be a good idea. Note: For this study we used the online panel of a private market research company located in New York City. This company has more than 200,000 panel members in North America who get points for performing several online activities including taking online surveys. The college-student panel is demographically representative, as there were students from 46 out of 52 states, about 58% of whom aged between 18 and 24. The distribution of 18–24 year olds is basically the same as the data provided by the U.S. Census bureau four years ago (58%). Additionally, a recent PEW report indicated that 92% of 18–29-year-olds had a smartphone, a ratio similar to what we observed in our dataset (90%). The data collection took place between September 6 and 9, 2013, and the respondents earned badges for taking the online survey. (Sources: http://www.pewInternet.org/~/media/Files/Reports/2013/PIP_Smartphone_adoption_2013.pdf, http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0281.xls)

Figure 13.2 Comparisons of American and Japanese Female College Students. Source: Acar (2013)



Another interesting finding that emerged from this cross-cultural comparison was the difference in profile-picture preferences. As Japanese are known to value anonymity and use avatars rather than real pictures, they seemingly maintain this culture on Facebook as well. While most Americans choose to have a "solo shot" profile picture, most Japanese users either had a "group shot" photo or simply a picture of something else. Although this is an improvement compared to the 20% real photo profiles on Mixi[1] three years ago, Japanese users still are highly different from American users when it comes to profile-picture choices. On the other hand, we were surprised to see that more than one-third of Americans posted a "group shot" as a profile photo, as Facebook literally means "face book": the traditional high-school yearbook that shows each student's solo shot. However, we suspect that females are more group-oriented and emotionally attached to their peers, and these ratios may differ for American males.

Figure 13.3 Profile Pictures of American and Japanese Female College Students. Source: Acar (2013)



Speaking of group orientation, selfishness, and social attachment, we measured "fear of missing out" and narcissism among both American and Japanese subjects. Fear of missing out means concern about not joining social events, as well as the inclination to share social activities with friends. We found that the two nations did

not differ on this dimension; however, Americans scored significantly higher than did the Japanese on the narcissism scale (questions like "People tell me I am attractive," "I believe I can influence people," etc.). At the same time, while narcissistic tendencies predicted whether American subjects posted pictures on Facebook or not, it had no impact on Japanese subjects. In other words, a Japanese person's online posting is not that much influenced by whether he or she has narcissistic tendencies.

Lastly, we wanted to test whether the findings we obtained in our focus interviews[15] with Japanese and American subjects could be replicated in large-scale data. Particularly, we wanted to know if American subjects felt more comfortable sharing private information, using Facebook for educational purposes, and adding strangers to their networks. We generated many different scenarios that involved Facebook use and asked both American and Japanese subjects if they would have felt comfortable taking the action indicated in each scenario. The findings confirmed most of our expectations as shown in the following table:

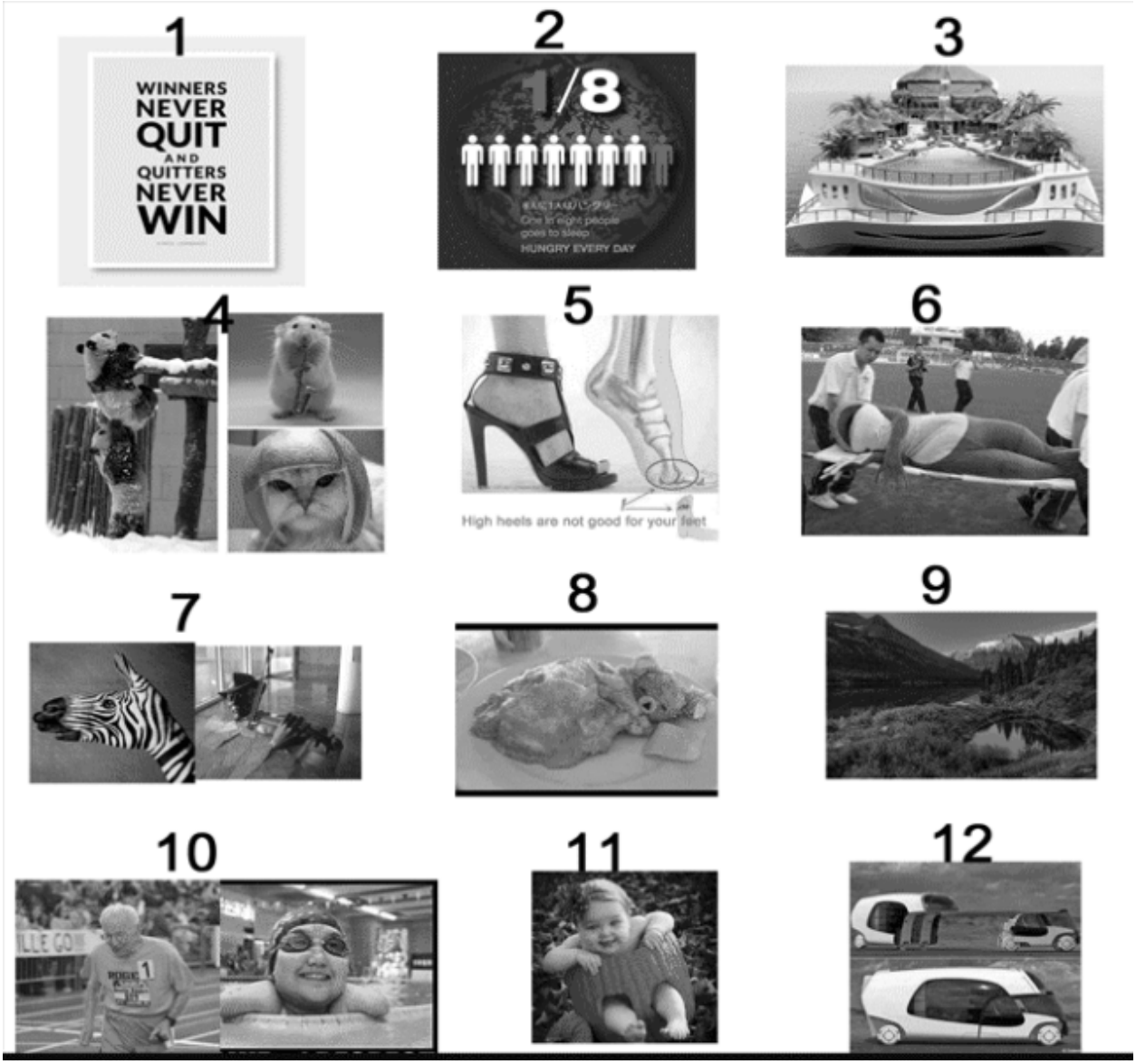
Table 13.4 Japanese and American College Students' Preferences on Facebook. Source: Acar (2013)

How comfortable would you feel friending your high school acquaintances on Facebook? (Friends whom you knew by name but were not so close)	USA	5.2	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	3.9	
How comfortable would you feel friending someone on Facebook after meeting that person at a café and having a nice chat for ten minutes? Note: that person is the same gender as you.	USA	4.6	Equal
	Japan	4.6	
Presume that the hair salon/barbershop you always go to has a Facebook page and the owner kindly asks you to be a fan of the page. How comfortable would you feel being a fan of your hairdresser's page on Facebook?	USA	6.2	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	4.7	
How comfortable would you feel posting a photo on Facebook that shows your family?	USA	6.0	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	3.4	
How comfortable would you feel sharing the mission statement of a political party you feel close to?	USA	4.5	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	3.1	
Presume that you work for a bookstore and your manager asked you to share the company's posts on your Facebook page every week. How comfortable would you feel sharing your company's posts on your Facebook page once a week?	USA	4.4	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	2.7	
You may or may not have a romantic partner at the moment, but how comfortable would you feel posting a picture on Facebook that shows you and your partner?	USA	5.9	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	3.5	
How comfortable would you feel Liking a Facebook post of a soft drink brand that says "Like our page and get a bottle of a soft drink at the nearest convenience store for FREE"	USA	5.5	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	3.7	
How comfortable would you feel friending your professors on Facebook?	USA	3.9	**Japanese subjects scored higher**
	Japan	4.3	
How comfortable would you feel friending your parents on Facebook?	USA	5.2	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	3.1	
How comfortable would you feel sharing a Facebook post of a soft drink brand on your timeline that says "Share our post and get a bottle of a soft drink at the nearest convenience store for FREE"?	USA	4.9	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	3.4	
How comfortable do you feel joining a Facebook page of a class you are taking?	USA	5.7	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	4.8	
Presume that you are working at a bookstore and there are ten other employees. Your manager tells you that you are expected to friend everybody on Facebook for better internal communication. How comfortable would you feel friending all the other employees?	USA	4.5	American subjects scored higher
	Japan	3.2	

As can be seen in the table, American subjects felt much more comfortable sharing information on Facebook than did Japanese students. The groups scored the same on the question asking about whether they would

friend someone on Facebook after chatting with that person at a café for the first time. The biggest differences that caught our attention were Japanese participants' reluctance to share a photo that shows either their partner or their family. Although Japanese are known to be very family-oriented people, obviously sharing family information publicly goes against Japanese values. Furthermore, just as we found in our focus-group study, it appeared that Japanese subjects were more interested in friending their professors than were American students. This is an interesting finding because in Japan usually students use *keigo* (honorific language) when talking to their professors and want to maintain distance between themselves and those whom they think are *erai* (people with social power). The fact that they want to be Facebook friends with their professors, but do not want to be friends with their parents or share a picture of a romantic partner, implies that Japanese people see Facebook as an official platform that can be used for information gathering rather than emotional bonding.

In a similar but separate study we asked Japanese and international exchange students what kind of content they would Like on Facebook. Since we did not have enough American and Western subjects, this time we mixed the responses of all international participants who came to Japan as exchange students (the data was collected in 3 different universities in Japan where the principal investigator taught part-time during the month of May, 2013). Different than the study mentioned above, we did not focus on any particular gender and about two thirds of the respondents were from different parts of Asia, not from Western countries.



Disclaimer: The author does not own these images. The images were gathered over the internet for research purposes.

The question asked:
Please carefully look at the examples above for each category. Based on your past experience on Facebook, please indicate (on a scale of 1 to 7) whether you would Like these kinds of posts on Facebook or not?

We did not observe a large number of differences between Japanese and international students except for the "landscape" and "cute babies & kids" categories. The fact that everything in the previous study was dramatically different and this time there were not many differences, made us conclude that Asians may not differ that much in terms of content sharing on Facebook as most of the international students were Asian. However, we think it begs an explanation why Japanese people are more likely to share the images of landscapes and cute children. Some people may speculate that females may be more interested in the pictures of babies and if the Japanese sample had a higher ratio of female subjects, this may have biased the data. However, when we compared only female students from both samples, the difference was still significant. Japan's zen culture that emphasizes the harmony between man and nature and the concept of "kawaii" (all little things are loveable whether they are cute or not) may have driven these differences.

Additionally we also looked at the rankings of each category. Although the differences were not statistically significant, the rankings also indicated that Japanese college students are less interested in "quotatiations," "interesting technology" and "raising awareness about humanitarian issues" compared to their Asian counterparts. Interestingly, the "fantasy/imagination" category was not rated as highly by Japanese respondents even though escapism promoted by the common "manga" subculture in Japan may suggest otherwise.

International Students		**Japanese Students**	
Ranking	Category	Ranking	Category
1	category 6- Funny, humorous	**1**	category 9- Landscape, relaxing scenery
2	category 12- Interesting technology	**2**	category 6- Funny, humorous
3	category 1- Inspirational/motivational quotations	**3**	category 8- Food, interesting and delicious food images
4	category 7- Art	**4**	category 7- Art
5	category 8- Food, interesting and delicious food images	**5**	category 4- Animals, cute pictures of animals
6	category 4- Animals, cute pictures of animals	**6**	category 11- Cute babies, kids
7	category 10- Determination and success	**7**	category 12- Interesting technology
8	category 5- Health tips, useful information for people	**8**	category 1- Inspirational/motivational quotations
9	category 2- Raising awareness about humanitarian issues	**9**	category 5- Health tips, useful information for people
10	category 9- Landscape, relaxing scenery	**10**	category 10- Determination and success
11	category 3- Fantasy, imagination	**11**	category 3- Fantasy, imagination
12	category 11- Cute babies, kids	**12**	category 2- Raising awareness about humanitarian issues

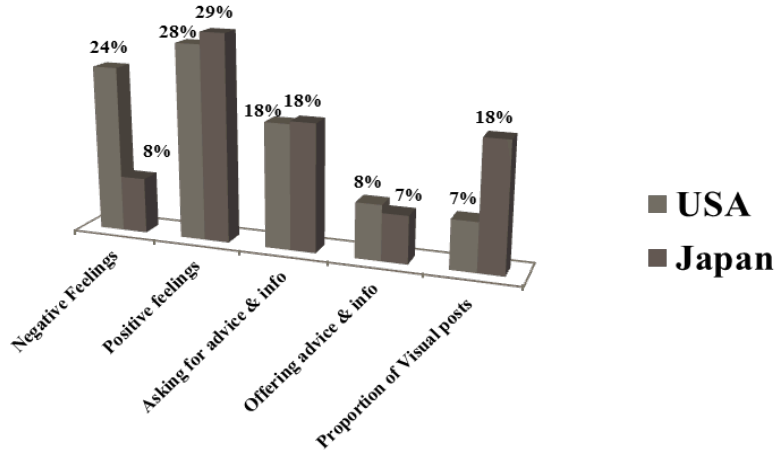
Facebook and Business in Japan

We also asked both American and Japanese subjects about their attitudes toward social media. Both Japanese and Americans had positive attitudes towards social media as more than two-thirds of the subjects disagreed with the statements "Social media is bad for our society" and "Social media has more demerits than merits." Both American participants and Japanese participants thought social media was good for society (see appendix). Since Japan is a risk-avoidant society and since recently there has been much discussion in the Japanese media about privacy issues caused by social media, we thought that Japanese would have more negative views of social media than did Americans, but the findings showed that Japanese still think positively about social media.

People may wonder if the content people post on Facebook brand walls differs across the Pacific. One of the students from my social media seminar looked at the last five messages posted on thirty Japanese and American brands' Facebook walls.[28] After compiling a total of 191 messages from comparable brands (exactly the same brands or brands from the same industries, as some Japanese brands did now allow their fans to post on their walls) in Japan and the United States, he concluded that what people tell brands is pretty much the same in both countries except for two striking differences: negative emotions and visual information. While

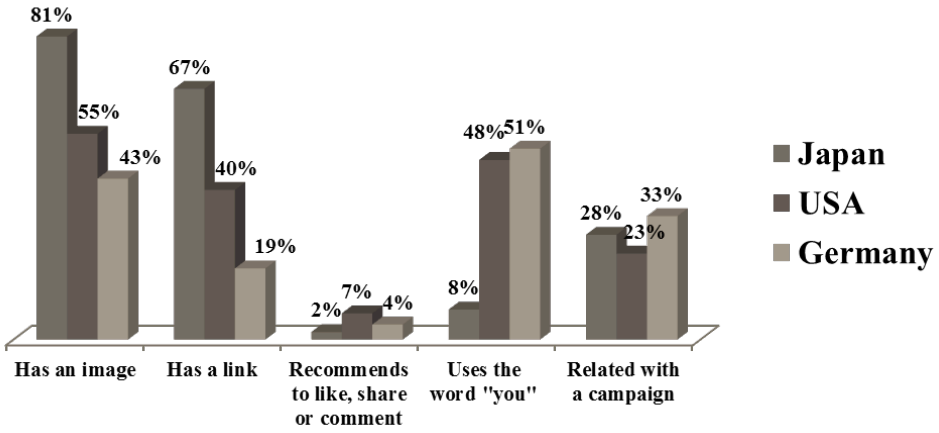
only a small fraction of Japanese consumers complained about or criticized brands on a Facebook wall, about a quarter of Americans posted a negative message publicly on Facebook. Additionally, Japanese users posted more visual information (photographs, emoticons, etc.) on brands' walls, perhaps a reflection of high-context Japanese culture that shows preference for visually rather than verbally expressed emotions. Another surprising aspect of this finding is the similar ratio of positive comments in both countries, as we expect Americans to post more positive statements. A study conducted in the 1980s showed that Americans compliment each other five times more frequently than do the Japanese, and Americans tend to be more elaborate when complimenting others.[29] This interpersonal communication pattern was not reflected on online brand-consumer conversations.

Figure 13.4 Differences between Japanese and American Facebook Users' Posts on Brand Walls. Source: Takamura (2013)



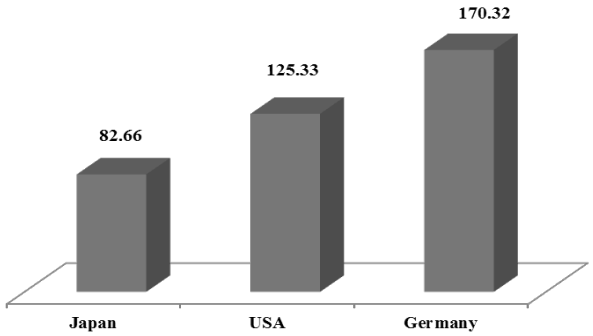
After these interesting findings we decided to deeply analyze the data from the cross-cultural study where we compared Japanese, German, and American brands' posts and consumers' reactions to them. The methodology was very simple: categorizing the last ten Facebook messages of the same brands or similar brands (in case the same brands are not available) in Japan, Germany, and the United States. In September 2012, two bilingual coders, one from Japan and one from Germany, classified 350 posts from Japan, 350 from Germany, and 350 from the United States. In each country, we selected thirty-five brands that represented seven different categories (Food & Beverage, Automotive, Electronics, Clothing, Health & Beauty, Travel, and Finance). As can be seen in the graph below, Japanese companies use the word "you" less often and recommend that users Like, share, or comment less frequently. At the same time, Japanese brands post more images and more links. All these findings reflect the high-context and indirect style of Japanese communication, as Japanese companies do not want to be seen as aggressive and pushy. As part of the soft-selling method common in Japan, brands provide visually appealing information or links to their sites but do not pressure Facebook users to take action.

Figure 13.5 Differences between Japanese, German and American Brands' Facebook Content. Source (Acar & Rauschnabel, 2013)



As predicted, we observed that Japanese posts had significantly fewer words than did American and German posts. Since Japan is a high-context country that puts more emphasis on visual messages we thought this finding was normal. However, we should also remember that counting Japanese characters that include some *kanji* may not be comparable with counting Roman characters because one kanji may represent a word or a whole phrase. . Additionally, in the Japanese language, subject pronouns are usually omitted. On the other hand, it is worth exploring why German posts had longer text than did American posts, as both countries have relatively similar communication styles.

Figure 13.6 Text Length in Japan, Germany and the US. Source Acar & Rauschnabel (2013)



In a separate study[15] our team also investigated the top hundred Japanese brands and the US brands' Facebook and Twitter activities in January 2012. Our initial analysis has shown that fewer Japanese brands are active both on Twitter and Facebook when compared with the top US brands. We also observed that Japanese brands, in general, ask fewer questions, post less frequently, do not address their fans directly, do not initiate conversations, reveal less info, and do not allow their fans to post on their walls. The top hundred American brands investigated in this study seemed to be far more active and assertive compared to their Japanese counterparts. We concluded that the low dialogic communication between brands and consumers in Japan can be explained by three cultural factors: 1) Japan is a high power-distance country, meaning there may be a power imbalance between consumers and corporations, with power skewing toward the latter. That is why "neither consumers nor large and well respected corporations might feel so comfortable with publicly exchanging messages that would be read by everyone." 2) "Japan is a culture of reservation and harmony; some marketing executives in Japan might just think it is very intrusive to send out many personal messages or ask questions on Twitter or Facebook." 3) Japan is a risk-avoidant country and social media involves many risks. Some managers

may think it better to stay away from or use social media passively rather than actively using it every day and engaging with customers.

Table 13.5 Activities of Japanese and American Brands in Social Media. Source: Acar et al. (2013)

Social Media Activity	Top 100 US Brands	Top 100 Japanese Brands
Has a Twitter account	95%	60%
Has a Facebook account	92%	37%
Tweeted, past 7 days	91%	68%
Posted on Facebook, past 7 days	83%	76%
Has multiple links in the Facebook profile	72%	43%
Allows posting on the Facebook wall	77%	29%
Identifies who is tweeting	13%	3%
Asked a question on Twitter, past 7 days	31%	5%
Asked a question on Facebook, past 7 days	50%	14%
Retweeted another user , past 7 days	55%	20%
Mentioned another user, past 7 days	78%	28%
Used a hashtag , past 7 days	71%	17%

Twitter Use in Japan

As mentioned above, Twitter is the most popular social media platform (excluding peer-to-peer group messaging app LINE) in Japan and Japan is the only country where Twitter is more popular than Facebook. What is more, Japan is the third-largest country on Twitter, with more than 35 million users.[30] Japanese is the second most popular language on Twitter[31] and in the year 2012 the top-two most tweeted moments in the world were related with Japan (*Castle in the Sky* Japanese TV program with 25,088 tweets per second, and the Japanese New Year, with 16,197 tweets per second).[32] So the question is: Why is Twitter so popular in Japan?

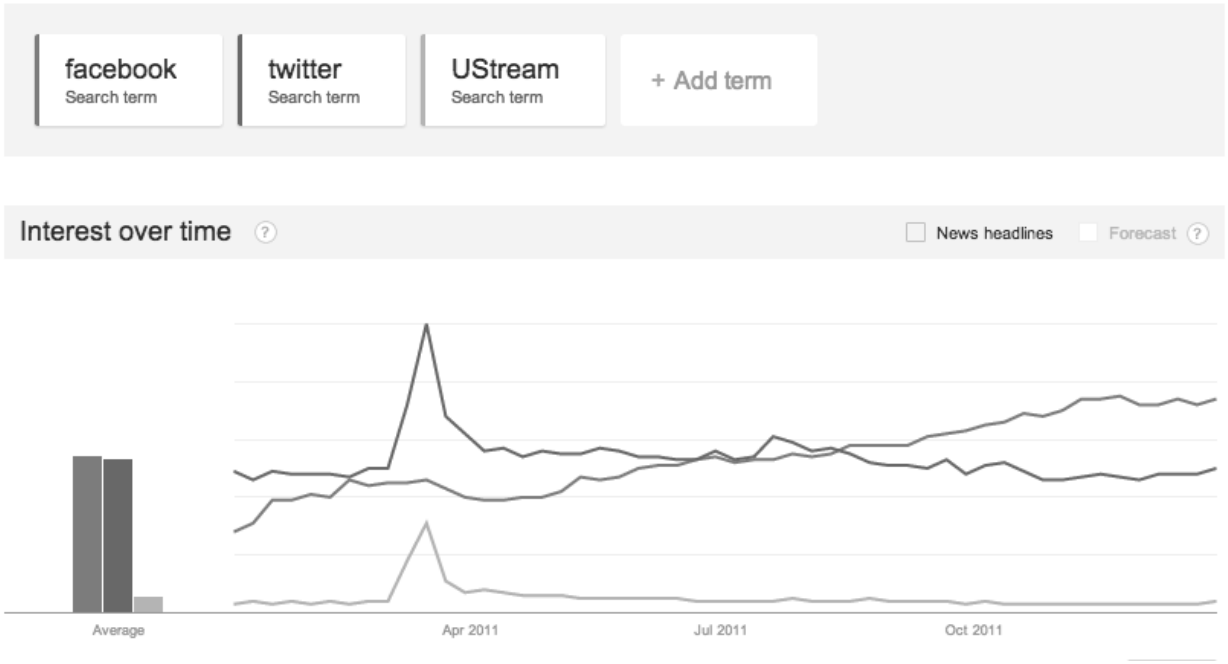
It is not so difficult to answer this question and some potential explanations follow:

- Even before Twitter was introduced, the Japanese online community had been interested in blogging. A survey from 2006 indicated that 74% of average Internet users in Japan read blogs.[33] These ratios were far higher than any other developed country back then, which shows how interested Japanese are in blogs. Since Twitter is a form of micro-blogging, it makes sense that it is successful in Japan.
- Japan is a culture of harmony. People avoid publicly criticizing; however, suppressing negative feelings and not venting them may cause stress. Hence, there is a platform called 2Channel where people criticize others, spread rumors, and freely express themselves by just using nicknames.[34] Since Twitter is a nickname-based platform, it is suitable for many who want to criticize things without revealing their true identity. Additionally, we should not forget that the majority of the Japanese still feel uncomfortable using their actual names and pictures in social media.
- An early study[1] that compared Mixi and Facebook found that 80% of Japanese users write diaries on Mixi, while almost no one writes a diary on Facebook. Since Tweeting what you are up to is like writing a short diary, we can speculate that this is one of the reasons why Japanese love Twitter.
- Japan is geographically small; it has only one time zone (in the United States there are four) and only six major network channels. This makes it easier for Twitter users to consume the TV content together. In this case, both TV and Twitter serve as a glue that helps the Japanese preserve cultural values and experience a sense of solidarity.

One may argue, "But what about the earthquake?" Although the earthquake caused an immediate spike in both Twitter and Ustream usage, in the long run it had almost no impact on the popularity of Twitter, as can be clearly seen in the graph below.[35] The graph, which shows the number of Google searches for each platform in Japan, generated by Google Trends TM, also makes very clear that Facebook's meteoric rise cannot be directly tied to the earthquake either. Even though the immediate changes can be seen on Twitter and Ustream users, obviously the

number of Facebook users did not increase for the following four to five weeks. Therefore, neither Facebook's nor Twitter's large Japanese user base can be tied to the earthquake. Based on the decrease in the popularity of both Ustream and Twitter in the long run, we can also speculate that large-scale events like disasters or social protests that cause sudden increases in the use of certain platforms may not have long-lasting effects.

Figure 13. 6. Social Media Trends after the Earthquake

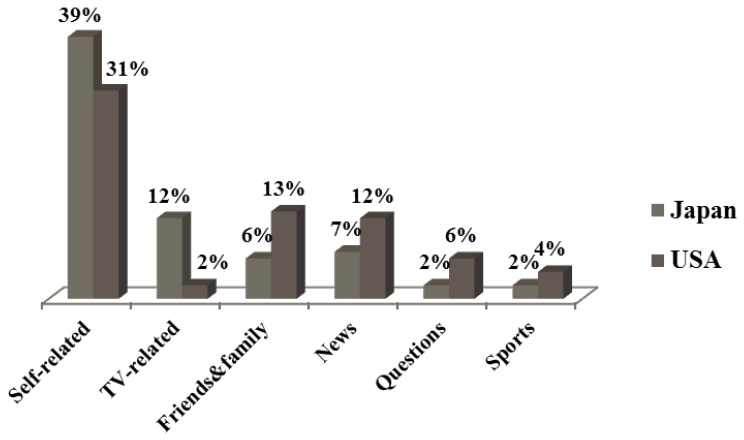


Two unique characteristics of Japanese Twitter users that may distinguish them from Western users are perhaps the number of accounts followed and percentage of protected accounts. When we conducted the online survey, we asked the subjects how many Twitter accounts they follow and how many followers they have in total. We also asked the same question to our Japanese students (*N*=71). The follower-to-followee ratio was almost the same in both countries (0.91 versus 0.89), indicating that both in Japan and the United States, social media users, in general, follow more people than the number of their own followers. However, it seemed Americans on average follow about 141 accounts and that number is only 105 among the Japanese. Since the difference was statistically significant, we concluded that Japanese follow fewer people on Twitter than do Americans. We think this may have to do with a higher desire for popularity in the US as in order to get more followers, people follow more people. Additionally, this finding is in line with past research that concluded that Chinese users don't care much about being popular online (e.g. they don't see social media as a platform for a popularity contest) compared to American social media users.[36] There may also be another reason for this phenomenon, which is the prevalence of protected accounts in Japan. We also asked our subjects whether their Twitter account is "protected," meaning their tweets are not public and can only be seen by a select number of people. To our great surprise, about 25% of Japanese respondents said that they had a secure Twitter account and their tweets cannot be publicly seen. This ratio is predicted to be less than 7% throughout the world.[37] The fact that many Japanese users do not make their tweets public indicates that they limit their messages to friends and family just like exchanging messages in traditional social networking platforms. In other words, for about a quarter of Japanese Twitter users, Twitter may be acting like a relationship-based social network rather than an information or interest network.

We can't understand Japanese Twitter use completely without cross-culturally comparing the Twitter content to another country. A student of mine classified the ten last tweets of one hundred Japanese and one hundred American students during the first week of December, 2011 (a total of two thousand tweets). The results showed that the Japanese posted more self-related messages and things related with TV. On the other hand, American tweets had significantly more references to news, sports, politics, and family. We concluded that Japanese post more self-related messages because mentioning others might be intrusive. For instance, if I mention my friend in my

message, he or she may feel compelled to reply or deeply wonder if the message meant something else (remember Japanese communication style tends to be indirect). Additionally, as indicated by past studies, the perception of intimacy in Japan and the United States are likely to be different. Japanese people love and respect their families but that does not necessarily mean they exchange verbal messages in social media. On a further note, we think Japanese TV-related tweets were far higher than the US ones perhaps because of the impact of TV shows and dramas on Japanese social life and Japan's single time zone (all Japanese can watch the same drama at the same time but in America people on the East and West coasts watch the same dramas at different times). We also found that most trending topics on Japanese Twitter were related to TV. This means, the popularity of social media, particularly Twitter, may actually strengthen TV's popularity in Japan, as it seems Twitter acts as a commercial tool to promote TV dramas.

Figure 13.7 Twitter Content in Japan and the US. Source Acar & Deguchi (2013)



Social Media Use by Politicians and Local Governments

We explored how politicians and local governments in Japan have been using social media and if there were cross-cultural differences in the use of these mediums. Because of small sample sizes and the lack of multiple coders, statistical tests were not run but the initial findings were eye-opening. In both of the studies my students coded the last ten messages by the most popular ten accounts in Japan and the United States (the ten most popular politicians, and the ten most popular states and prefectures) during the month of January in 2013. Although Japanese local governments' postings reflected Japanese values, Japanese politicians' tweeting patterns seemed a little bit unusual. For instance, Japanese are known to be less assertive and aggressive than Americans, but there was more criticism in the tweets of Japanese politicians compared to those posted by American politicians. Furthermore, Japanese politicians' messages were also more direct and action-oriented than the tweets of American politicians. The findings and the detailed graphs are available at http://www.slideshare.net/adamacar.

Main differences between Japanese and American politicians' Twitter use:

- Japanese values are not necessarily reflected in Japanese politicians' tweets, or, Japanese politicians who actively use Twitter may not be mainstream politicians.
- Although Japanese people tend to criticize others less and state their own opinions less compared to Americans, our results indicate that, on Twitter, Japanese politicians are more outspoken than their American counterparts.
- Self-promotion and promotion of another person or group for doing a good job was much more common in the United States. This may be related with the group-oriented nature of Japanese culture where groups but not individuals are the main focus.

Main differences between Japanese and American local governments' Twitter use:

- American local governments mostly tweet about local news, while Japanese prefectures tend to focus on informing people about local events and activities.

- American local governments ask many questions but Japanese prefectures do not.
- American local governments tend to thank followers and show appreciation (verbally) while Japanese prefectures do not.
- Reference to blogs is almost nonexistent in the United States.
- Tips and useful information are almost nonexistent in Japan.

Emerging Social Media Platform: LINE

LINE is a popular group-messaging platform owned by a Korean company based in Tokyo, Japan. Currently LINE has more than 230 million active users in more than two hundred countries.[4] It is the biggest social media platform in Japan, with more than 47 million registered users; it is reportedly the fastest-growing communication medium in history, as it reached the 100 million user mark within nineteen months. Twitter and Facebook, in contrast, took forty-nine and fifty-four months respectively to pass this milestone.[38] The company is also very profitable; in the first quarter of 2013 it reported revenues of $58 million, which can be used to expand the company in countries outside Japan.[39]

People can do many things with this application, including calling people for free, chatting, group-chatting, timeline updating, getting coupons, playing games, and collecting digital stamps. Since it has a timeline and many-to-many messaging options, it can be considered a social networking platform and it seems to be the most popular social media tool, especially among college students (see the graph below). Although it is speculated that LINE became popular in Japan because phone lines went down after the earthquake, it is likely that this is not the main reason. Our focus group with high school students in early 2012 showed that LINE first picked up among high school students in major cities that were not affected by the earthquake. Additionally, before LINE started in Japan, the United States had WhatsApp, China had WeChat, Korea had Kakao Talk, all of which are extremely similar to LINE. In Japan, however, there was no local application that allowed free message exchanges and smooth free calls.

In February 2013, we asked college students how they used social media platforms and about 58% of them indicated using LINE almost every day, more frequently than Facebook, Twitter, and Mixi.[39] LINE use was so popular that students even indicated LINE would be their first-choice social media tool if a disaster were to strike. We also asked participants how many brands they follow on LINE and on Facebook. It was clear that LINE followers were more likely to follow a brand compared with Facebook users. About 60% of LINE users were following at least one brand, whereas only 30% of Facebook users reported following a brand.[39]

LINE also seems to be very popular among Japanese brands, despite the fact that it charges each company about $7,000 just to have a LINE account for only six months. Our content analysis of the last ten LINE messages of six major brands (au, Sukiya, Tsutaya, Shiseido, Lawson, and Coca-Cola) from six different industries showed that what brands do on LINE is similar to what they do on Twitter (giving away coupons, providing campaign information, and presenting the latest news about products and services). However, it was found that they send messages with many emoticons (smiles, heart marks, etc.) that may seem very friendly and personal, the messages are longer, and these messages are rarely sent (e.g., a few times a month).

One important element that distinguishes LINE from all other platforms in terms of brand communications is that it allows brands to create digital icons/stickers called *stamps* and distribute them to their fans. One may wonder why people would want to download these digital icons and then share them with their friends; the trick is these stamps can be useful to express emotions (basically stamps replace traditional emoticons). Instead of sending the message *Merry Christmas* and adding a smiley face or a tiny holiday-related image, users may send a cute Coca-Cola–themed stamp that their friends perhaps don't have. Consumers sometimes can receive these stamps right after following a brand on LINE, or they may need to perform an activity (join a campaign or buy the product) in order to get a code that can be used to download the stamp. Once downloaded, users can see the stamp in their emoticon library to use in conversations whenever they want.

These stamps or digital stickers have several implications. First of all, Japan is a high-context culture that puts special emphasis on nonverbal expressions of emotions, and obviously LINE's user base skyrocketed in a short

time because LINE provided rich opportunities to express emotions with its stamps' messaging platforms. As a matter of fact, our data shows that 87% of LINE users downloaded additional stickers (even though the app comes with at least thirty free stickers different from those on any other platform), 62% used branded stickers (stamps), and 25% purchased more stickers sold by LINE. Secondly, using LINE stamps issued by brands is very valuable both for brands and consumers. It is a subtle soft-selling technique that makes consumers share brands' logos for free. At the same time, for consumers, it is an unobtrusive and rewarding way for them to share their interest in a particular brand, to show that they are unique (since not everyone has the same branded stickers, most of the time it is a unique thing to include a branded sticker in a conversation), and to communicate their personality as brands we use reflect our image.

CHAPTER XV

Conclusions

I conducted the first study about Facebook in March 2006 and back then perhaps no one suspected it could grow this big. We human beings usually have the hindsight bias (the *I-knew-it-all-along effect*), but in reality we have a very little accuracy when it comes to predicting the future. The outstanding example is the last global economic recession we experienced in 2008. Despite the fact that there are tens of thousands of economists all around the world doing research round the clock, no one knew that it was coming (except a few unknown scholars). I grew up reading Fukuyama's future predictions that the third world war would break out in early 2000s because of petrol—which, of course, never happened. Every December I read the emerging trends for the following year, and they always turn out to be false. The fact is, the social sciences deal with human beings, who consist of atoms and molecules but are also driven by primordial urges, psyches, and emotions. Although a chemist can predict—I am not talking about quantum mechanics here—the behavior of an atom in certain conditions and a biologist may control the growth of stem cell in laboratory settings, social scientists may not be able to predict what a mass of people will do six months from today. What we do cannot go beyond "informed guesswork," because every human being is driven by millions of factors including his past, his character, his biological features, his environment, and his culture. We should also never forget randomness. That's why I talked about herding and information cascade, which are useful in understanding why your friend liked a Harlem Shake video but did not care about a fun video clip your friends created for your class.

As social scientists we can, however, explain why people do things that they do. We can look at the recent past and we can guess what is likely to happen in the near future. By seeing the patterns in human behavior we are definitely in a better condition to guess what a person might do in different but similar circumstances, though we can never have as much confidence as a physicist. -For example, water always boils at one hundred degrees Celsius, but a price discount does not always increase sales. Nevertheless, it is not a law but a proven theory. We cannot reject social theories just because they don't work one hundred percent of the time.

When predicting future human behavior, one thing we have to remember is how it is shaped by local cultures. And it is not only behavior; sometimes the same outcome may be driven by totally different attitudes and expectations. My favorite story is about Sony and Philips. When the engineers from Sony were asked why they invented Walkman, they answered, "Because we thought people needed a device that allows them to listen to music and not bother others." Around the same time, some engineers from Philips (a Dutch company) were also working on a Walkman-like device and were asked the same question. Their response was a little bit different. They wanted a device that allows people to listen to music and not be bothered by others.

There are thousands of cultures, all of which obviously influence the attitudes toward and perception of new technologies and their role in human interactions. We already knew that social media changed the lives of people all around the world dramatically, but we did not know why and how social media could make such a big impact on the way people think, act, and communicate. This dissertation was written to find answers to these questions. Starting with definitions, followed by relevant theories, and supported by several studies, I tried to provide a glimpse of the unseen side of social media.

This dissertation talked about many different things, but it can be summarized into a few sentences. First of all, it is very clear that social media is just a different name given to the Internet, because nowadays almost all major web sites can be considered social media platforms. Second, people share things in social media not because they care about others, but to improve their self-images. And third, the most important of all, culture still hugely influences how people use social media and how much they use it. The core concept of culture, the self versus other orientation, explains pretty much everything in social media use, from how often people use it to what they do on it.

Although all of the chapters are unique, Chapter 12 where I introduced the Cross-Cultural Self versus Others' Worth Framework, is the core of this dissertation. After glancing over this chapter, readers can get a good understanding of the nation-level predictors of social media use. It should also be noted that this is the first academic work in the world that connects social media use and suicide, corruption and happiness. More importantly, the framework that I developed at the end of this chapter can successfully explain how different countries use social media and give us valuable cues about the adoption of future social innovations. As the two common cultural theories developed by Edward Hall and Geert Hofstede have been criticized by a number of scholars (see Chapter 13), my framework which is based on country-level self-esteem and country-level conservatism (collectivism) may fill the gap and be applied in various cross-cultural communication settings.

This dissertation started with a chapter that talked about the powerful impact of social media and change. In the first chapter we emphasized the relationship between new technologies and social changes that may override the influence of culture. However, we should remember that any given culture has been developed over thousands of years and cannot simply change in a short time by the impact of new technologies. Additionally, although we may think everything around us has been changing at the speed of light, that is just our lifestyles, not our cultural values. Values only transform after mass traumatic events like wars and disasters, etc. That's why the old generations always complain how different the young generation is, and when the young generations grow old they themselves start the complaining. In the long run, cultural values always remain the same. The differences we observed in the previous chapters are not the results of social media use or non-use; they are reflections of cultural values on the adoption and utilization of new communication tools.

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Chapter 1

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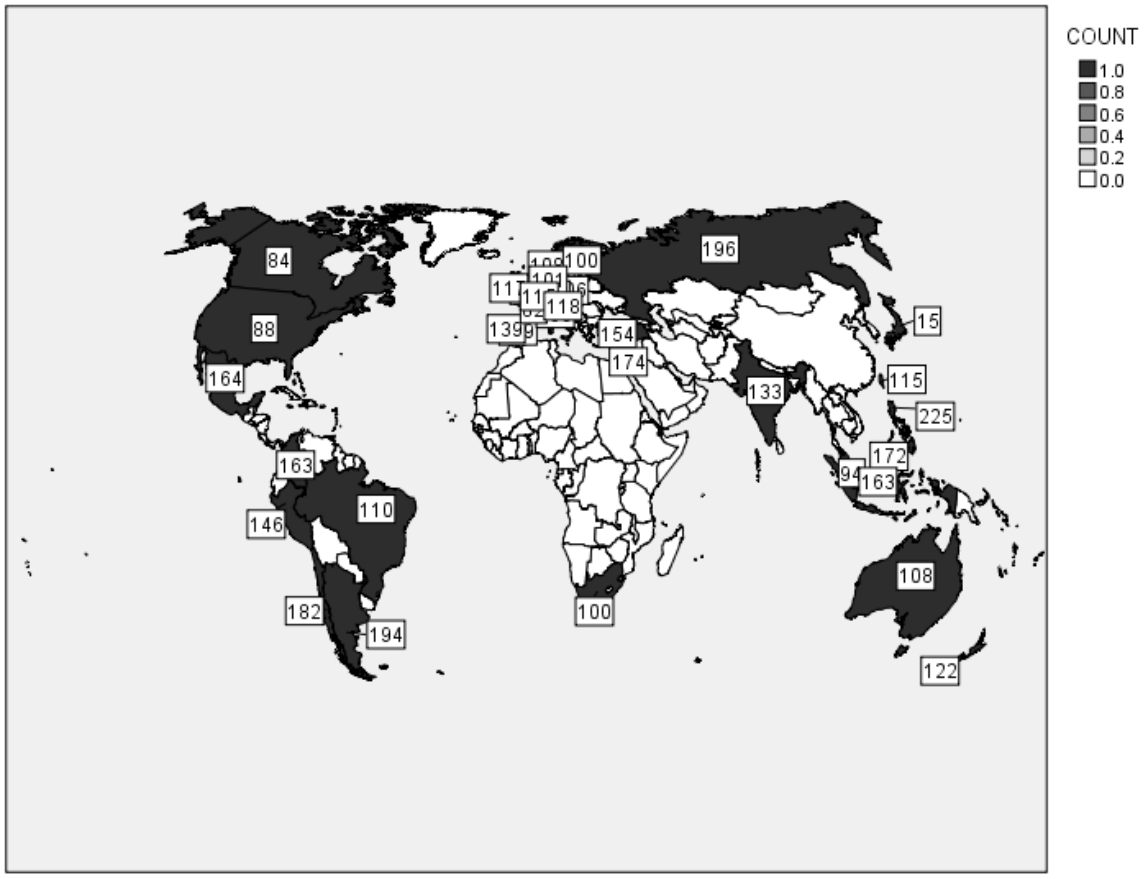
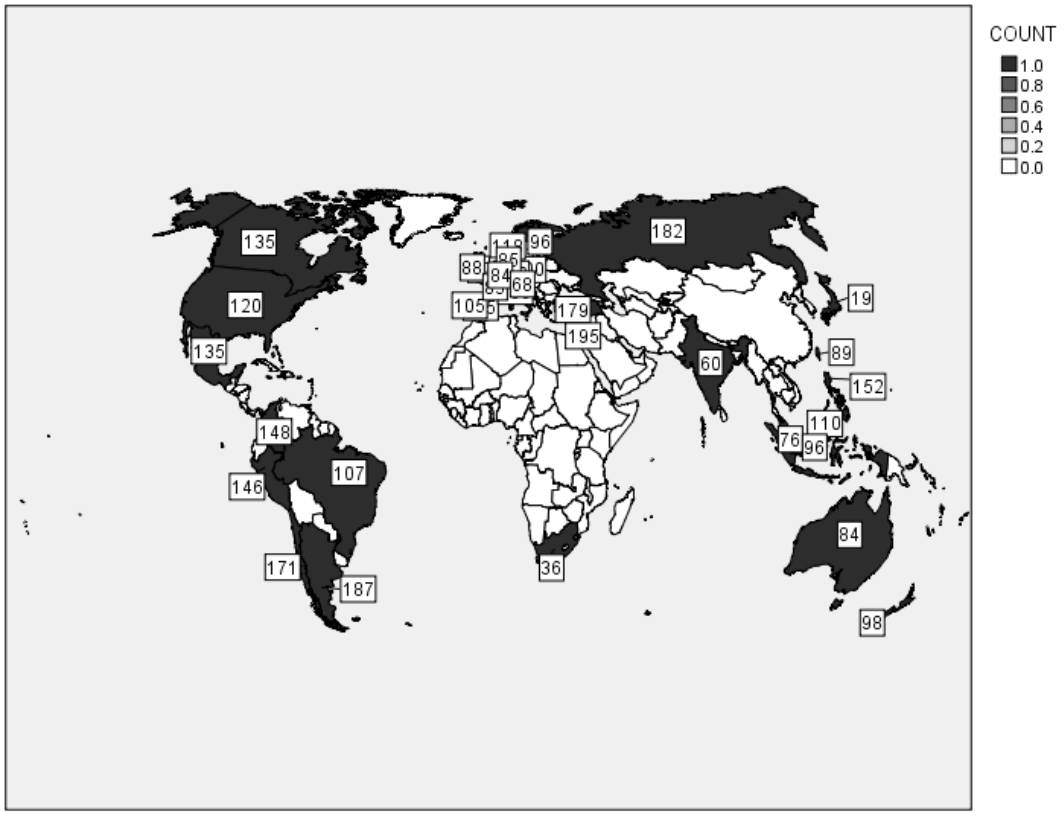
APPENDIXES

Appendix A
Share of Time Spent for Online Social Networking All around the World



Appendix B
Average Time Spent for Social Networking All around the World



Apendix C

Data Sources

Social Media Use Index (% of Social Network Users, Average time spent for social networking, Proportion of Social Networking Activities)	comScore. 2011. Dec 21, [2013-04-20]. It's a social world: top 10 need-to-knows about social networking and where it's headed. Retrieved www.comScore.com/content/download/12135/231287/file/Top_10_Need-to-Knows_About_Social_Networking_and_Where_it_is_headed.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk
High-Context and Low – Context Countries	Hall, E. T., & Hall, M. R. (1990). Understanding cultural differences. Intercultural press.
Hofstede's Dimensions	http://geert-hofstede.com/
Schwatz's Dimensions	Basabe, N., & Ros, M. (2005). Cultural dimensions and social behavior correlates: Individualism-Collectivism and Power Distance. *International Review of Social Psychology*, *18*(1), 189-225. (pages 223-224)
Tompenaars' Dimensions	Basabe, N., & Ros, M. (2005). Cultural dimensions and social behavior correlates: Individualism-Collectivism and Power Distance. *International Review of Social Psychology*, *18*(1), 189-225. (pages 223-

	224)
World Values Survey	World Values Survey Group (2013). World Values Survey. Retrieved from http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder_published/article_base_54/files/ValueScores_5_waves.doc
The GLOBE Dimensions	House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (2004).*Culture, leadership, and organizations*. Sage.
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Pace of Life Values	Levine, R. V., & Norenzayan, A. (1999). The pace of life in 31 countries. *Journal of cross-cultural psychology*, *30*(2), 178-205.
Emotional Expression Values	Matsumoto, D., Yoo, S. H., & Fontaine, J. (2008). Mapping expressive differences around the world: the relationship between emotional display rules and individualism versus collectivism. Journal of cross-cultural psychology,39(1), 55-74.
Big Five Personality Variables	Schmitt, D. P., Allik, J., McCrae, R. R., & Benet-Martínez, V. (2007). The geographic distribution of Big Five personality traits patterns and profiles of human self-description across 56 nations. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *38*(2), 173-212.
Social Capital Index, Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index	Lattin, R & Young, S. Country Ranking: Social Capital Achievement. Web Log. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CC4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cauxroundtable.org%2Fview_file.cfm%3Ffileid%3D43&ei=FfFGUr20EMjMkwXNqICIDA&usg=AFQjCNGXqaXgLdyAWHiNuP41E1Fk1M8clg&sig2=o4GaAHWDr43mrS-cb88mkA&bvm=bv.53217764,d.dGI
Privacy Index	Privacy International (2007). National Privacy Ranking 2007 - Leading Surveillance Societies Around the World. Retrieved online https://www.privacyinternational.org/sites/privacyinternational.org/files/file-downloads/phrcomp_sort_0.pdf
Happiness Index	Abdallah, S., Michaelson, J., Shah, S., Stoll, L., & Marks, N. (2012). The Happy Planet Index: 2012 Report. A global index of sustainable well-being. The New Economics Foundation, UK.
***Suicide Rates	World Health Organization. (2013). Suicide rates per 100,000 by country, year and sex (Table). *Retrieved September 1, 2013 from* http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide_rates/en/
***GDP Per Capita, Income Distribution, GDP Growth, Population Growth, Urban Population Ratio, Unemployment Rates	World Bank. (2013). Data retrieved September 1, 2013, from World DataBank. database
Cultural Diversity, Ethnic Fractalization	Fearon, J. D. (2003). Ethnic and cultural diversity by country*. *Journal of Economic Growth*, *8*(2), 195-222.
***Median Age	CIA World Fact Book (2013). Median Age. Retrieved from http://world.bymap.org/MedianAge.html